1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

their designation with a certain tolerant wisdom. Not so the present young generation in the farming community for whom education and material facilities have presented the chance of escape from a social inferiority complex.

The village was traditionally the community-group in rural Malta. Contact with the towns and Valletta was limited, especially for the villages of the west and in Gozo, until buses, press and rediffusion narrowed the gulf, but it was hardly less than the contacts between the villages themselves. The village was the group for most social interaction. Currently, the trend is towards a Malta-wide community-group in which villages are losing much of their isolation, although there is very little uniformity in this process. Sub-urban villages are clearly absorbing non-rural characteristics much more quickly than is the case in outlying parts of the Islands.

The nucleus of village life is the Church and the first citizen is the Parish Priest. The Priest combined teaching and general advisory duties with his spiritual role (see Chapter VI C). He was also the main link with the world outside the village through his relaying of general news from his pulpit. Normally, land transfers and a wide variety of matters connected with the agricultural cycle were announced by the Priest. The Church was the social meeting place and the basis of institutionalised activity. Even the village *festa*, that single day of wild exuberance, noise, fire-works, procession and carnivalesque has as its pretext a religious observance such as the honouring of the particular Saint of the village or the National Feast of the Shipwreck of St. Paul. In all this, the link between Priest and people was often further cemented by wide kinship connexions within the village. The son of an illiterate farmer might progress through Seminary and University to return to his home village as a priest and to be claimed as a relative by many members of that static and much inter-married community.

Such proximity, together with the very number of the priesthood in any parish made for a familiarity with the personnel of the Church just as confession, fasting, observance of Saints' and other special days, quite apart from the daily Mass, made for close acquaintance with its practice.

It is convenient to use the past tense in the foregoing only because the picture sketched has been modified in recent decades. It is however still the essential basis of communal life, especially in the rural community which, as suggested, holds to traditional custom longer than does the town. The modifications which have appeared are important in this present consideration because they lie behind the current social upheaval in which the individual countryman is being faced with a clash of new against old. If, as seems possible, he leaps to the new so completely as to relinquish the old entirely, then the traditional order of society will disappear along with the agricultural system on which it is based. This is the problem of the farmer in Maltese rural society.

An early non-religious movement was that of the Band Clubs; the first appeared in Rabat in 1860. But even these came to be identified with particular Churches and also with parish rivalries. The Band Club grew to become a major feature of social life in both town and country in Malta, although in Gozo it has had only a limited extension outside Victoria.

The Band Club is essentially a male organisation. Women have never been more than tolerated spectators and, to this extent, the movement reflects the place of women in Maltese society. Emancipation of women has spread into the countryside from the towns but even today women take an undemonstrative part in village activity and their movement outside the home is largely confined to Church-going, shopping and possibly field-work. The modern young woman who has had at least eight years schooling seeks paid employment beyond the house and fields. In rural circles the tendency is still to frown mightily at such a suggestion but it can only be a matter of a few years before what is now accepted in Valletta becomes tolerated in rural Gozo.

Functional diversification has been the keynote of twentieth century village society in the Maltese Islands. There is no evidence to show that there is any challenge to the position of the Parish Priest in matters religious (the situation has been less satisfactory from the point of view of the Church in urban Malta)

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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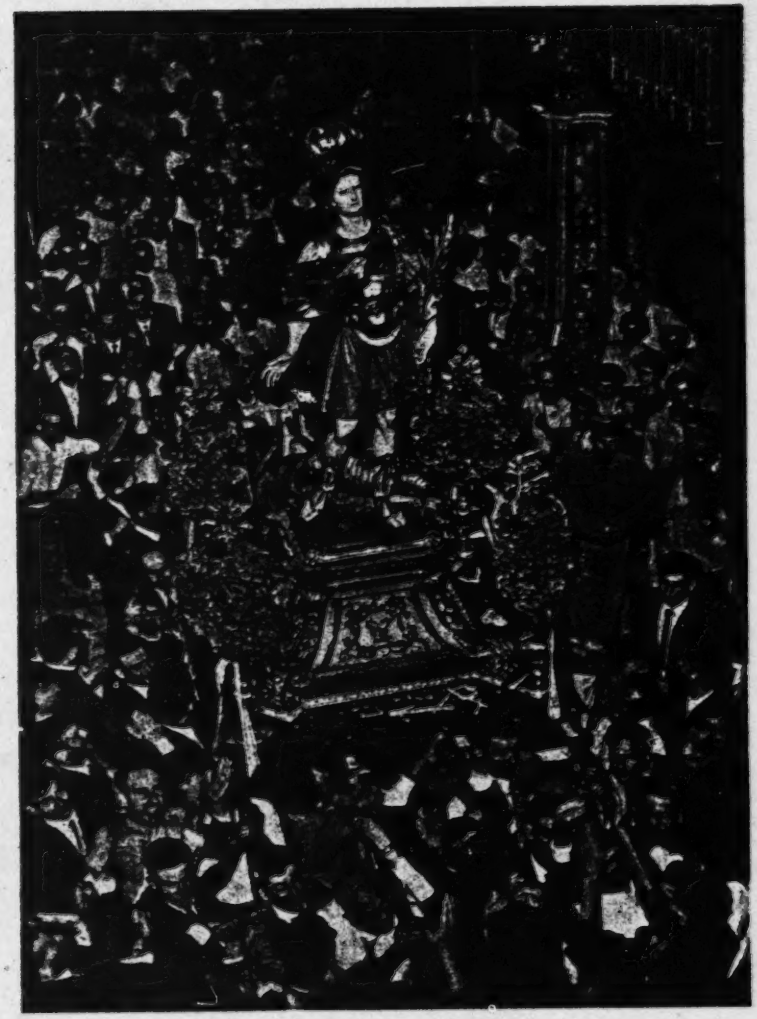

St George and partisans

[Frontispiece, facing p.iii]

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

rulers who sought to control her strategic position and fine natural harbours. Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans successively occupied the islands. Although it is generally held that Malta and Gozo formed part of the Byzantine Empire, virtually nothing is known of this period of Maltese history. In A.D. 870 the Arabs occupied the islands. Two hundred years later they were replaced by the Normans under Count Roger. After the death of the last Norman king, Malta shared the fate of Sicily and passed successively to the Swabians (1194–1266), the Angevins (1266–1283), the Aragonese (1283–1410), and the Castilians. In 1530, Emperor Charles V handed over Malta and Gozo with their protesting inhabitants as a fief in perpetuity to the Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem, a powerful body of celibate nobles vowed to helping the poor, caring for the sick and waging war on Islam. Napoleon drove out the Knights in 1798, and in 1800 Britain replaced the French. The islands were formally ceded to Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1814. Since then they have remained a British possession.

The most important recorded event in Malta's early history was the shipwreck of St. Paul in A.D. 60.[1] During the three months he stayed in Malta, he is popularly believed to have converted the people to Christianity. Whether he converted many is a moot point, but it is a fact that he baptized the Roman governor, Publius, who became Malta's first Bishop. The Maltese are intensely proud of the apostolic origin of their religion. *Missierna San Pawl*, 'Our Father St. Paul', as he is usually called, is the principal patron saint of the islands, and the feast of his shipwreck is a national celebration. Not surprisingly, there are many local legends about him. One holds that the first people to heed his gospel were the villagers of Naxxar, and that his preaching there was heard by the people of Xewkija in Gozo.

The line of bishops established with Publius was broken during the long period of Moslem rule. Count Roger, however, re-established and endowed an episcopal see. He also helped to arrange other details of ecclesiastical organization which had lapsed while Malta was under Arab domination. The present line of Maltese bishops dates from this period.

Malta had a considerable measure of local autonomy during the Aragonese and Castilian periods. Public affairs were administered

[1] Acts 27 and 28.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

occupations, 52 per cent are service personnel and skilled workers, 27 per cent are unskilled and semi-skilled labourers and 14 per cent are engaged in agriculture. Just over two-thirds of the total are employed outside the village. The majority of these, as in Farrug, work in the Grand Harbour industrial area. Those who work in the village are for the most part self-employed. They are farmers, shopkeepers, blacksmiths and carpenters.

In Table No. 1 I have compared the various occupational classes in Kortin and Farrug to each other and to the national figures.

III

Most villages look very much alike. Their magnificent baroque churches provide a startling contrast to the low, flat-roofed houses grouped tightly around them. As the parish church towers over the village, so it dominates it socially, for the church is in every sense the centre around which the life of the village revolves. In front of the church there is usually a large square, the *misrah* or *pjazza*, which is the social centre of the village. Various village clubs and lay societies, as well as the police station, are situated on the *pjazza*, or just off it, as are the principal wine shops, the government dispensary and the finest houses of the village. As the square is usually the terminal point of the local bus line, it is the point at which most people enter and leave the village. It is also the stage on which the principal events of village life take place: the annual feast, or *festa*, of the patron saint, the many religious processions and the occasional political rallies. On Sundays, and especially during the long summer evenings, the square teems with groups of men, who sit about on steps and benches, talking and arguing for hours on end. During weekday mornings, it belongs to the old men of the village, now freed by government old age pensions from the backbreaking toil in the fields that was the lot of their forefathers.

Each village is first and foremost a community of neighbours. Even the smallest of them have distinct residential groups, the members of which are in closer contact with each other than with people living in other parts of the village. This is, of course, particularly true of the larger villages. But even in Farrug, a village of about 1,400, the extremities of the village and the various streets and alleys form separate neighbourhoods. The many little shops

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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438 The many little shops
443 scattered about the village permit the women to do most of their
512 shopping near their own homes. Because of the long, hot summers
621 when food spoils quickly, they shop separately for each meal.
[251] Their shopping trips begin on the way home from the early Mass,
[796] at about 4.30 or 5 o'clock in the morning, and continue until
7 or 8 o'clock in the evening. Thus, during the course of a day, a woman may make as many as a dozen trips to the shops as well as to the hawkers who pass through the neighbourhood. These trips are social occasions during which she comes in contact with friends and neighbours from all parts of the village, and in the process hears the village news.

278 The men are out of the village from 6 o'clock or so in the
512 morning to about 2 o'clock in the afternoon in the summer, and
517 in the winter from about 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock
621 in the evening. But summer or winter, in the late afternoon and the early evening the men gather in the clubs, wine shops and cafés. Besides the clubs and important cafés in the square, which draw men from all over the village, there are many small neighbourhood wine shops. Most have a regular clientele of friends and neighbours who spend hours together talking, playing cards and drinking tea, soft drinks or wine. Many cafés also have television. Thus, though most inhabitants of a village are in fairly frequent contact with each other, the gossip groups of the women and the wine shops of the men form local social centres which help bind neighbours more closely to one another. These neighbourhoods develop a certain group loyalty.

621 It often happens that some of the neighbourhoods in a town or
794 village are centred on small chapels. In times gone by there used
796 to be a certain amount of good-natured competition between the youngsters of these districts over the festas of the patron saints of their respective chapels. But, except on rare occasions, this rivalry never threatened the unity of the village during the annual festa of the patron saint of the parish. Frequent removals from house to house within the village have usually helped to prevent the development of disruptive sectional loyalties.

621 Since each village is also a separate parish it is not possible to
[771] consider a village entirely as a secular community. Religion per-
[794] meates the structure of Maltese society to an extent that makes it quite impossible to classify many institutions as either religious or secular. As a secular community, a village has no official leader, it

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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owns no land or other property in common and its inhabitants are rarely called upon or choose to work for a common end. At the same time, villagers are conscious of belonging to a distinct social entity which is distinguished from other villages by a collective nickname and a common sub-culture.

Many villages have a dialect quite distinct from that of their neighbours, which the inhabitants, even those who have learned to speak 'correctly' (*bil-pulit*), normally use to each other; although they will invariably address strangers in their school Maltese. There are also a number of minor variations of certain customs between villages or districts. These may include the way church bells are rung to announce a death or the way some aspects of the festas are organized. Finally, each village has its own very private body of gossip, stories, scandals and jokes, which makes up a part of its history and tradition that is not shared with outsiders.

As a congregation and a religious corporation, the village *qua* parish owns land and other property, including the parish church. It also has an appointed leader in the parish priest. The inhabitants of the village meet regularly for worship, to take part in religious processions and to carry out other devotional activities. Furthermore, they act together to celebrate the annual festa of the patron saint, who symbolizes the unity of the secular and religious aspects of the village, for he is patron of both village and parish.

A village can also be regarded as a moral community. That is, people who live there must conform to a certain code of conduct. While the community cannot enforce this code with the type of formal sanctions the police and the Church use to punish infractions of secular and religious laws, public opinion can, and does, exert great pressure for conformity. A person who flouts the canons of convention becomes the object of malicious gossip and, depending on the nature of the offence, he may also become the target of overt hostile action and have his house front splashed with paint, or his front door burned. The only way to escape from the sanctions of public opinion is to move to one of the urban areas or the expanding new suburbs, where licence can be relatively anonymous.

Members of a village thus share a common body of custom and tradition; they also display an intense loyalty to their place of birth. This sense of loyalty is strongest during the annual festa of

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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the village, which draws in native sons and daughters from all over the country, and often from as far away as Canada and Australia. This loyalty is also evident at other times. Villagers like to think of themselves as a united body, and they take care to protect the appearance of unity before strangers. This is an attitude of which anyone studying the social history of a village becomes keenly aware. Strangers are thus treated with great reserve. The inhabitants of the smaller villages are well known for their reluctance to give any information about their neighbours to strangers. Inquiring visitors are often referred to the parish priest, who, as village spokesman, screens them and, if possible, deals with their questions. The reserve of a village *vis-à-vis* a stranger is considerably more than just an expression of village loyalty. Present also is the very real fear of vengeance should the answer to a stranger's question lead to some unpleasantness for a neighbour. Social relations in a small village are to a very considerable extent governed by the proverb 'Don't make an enemy of your neighbour' (*Taghmilx ghadu lil ġarek*).

In view of this loyalty, it is not surprising that people express their solidarity with their native village by opposition to other villages. A village's traditional rivals are usually those with which it has the most frequent contact. I was almost invariably warned by villagers that the inhabitants of the neighbouring village were a treacherous and savage lot. There are many tales of hostility between neighbouring villages, especially over the celebration of the annual festa, which I dare say have lost nothing in retelling. I was told a number of stories of how youths stampeded goats through their rivals' festa processions, and of expeditions which stole fireworks, attacked street decorations and performed other daring escapades. Although most of these adventures are said to have taken place many years ago, they are no more unusual than some of the incidents that I witnessed.

If the intense inter-village rivalry of former times has abated somewhat, it is probably because increased education and contact outside the villages have helped to break down ignorance and isolation. But this rivalry still lies dormant, and may flare up at the slightest provocation from a traditional rival; I have seen a number of fights over trivial incidents during festas and football matches. The number of police at village feasts and the quantity and density of the barbed-wire entanglements at the Schreiber

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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a very different role from that of their Spanish counterparts, the Civil Guard, whom Kenny describes as 'the traditional enemy of the peasants'.[1]

III

The very considerable authority of the Church in Malta is derived not from law, but from the loyalty of a people who fervently practise their religion. Until recently, there had never been a separation in their minds between Church and State, between the religious and secular elements in their daily lives. The Church, as we have already observed, has occupied this position for many centuries. Its power is bolstered by its considerable wealth, for in Malta the rich property and lands of the Church have not been expropriated by the State, as they have in so many other Catholic countries.[2]

As the official representative of the Church, the parish priest occupies a position of great importance in his community. He has authority in all religious matters affecting his parishioners. He ministers to their spiritual and often to their personal needs. He alone can arrange for the important ceremonies which mark the stages in their lives. These *rites de passage* include baptism, confirmation, marriage, death and burial. He also controls the many ritual activities of the village as a whole. These are the daily services of worship and the ceremonies, processions and feasts by which all Maltese, but above all the countrymen, regulate their days and mark the divisions of the year. Through his preaching and admonition he defines, interprets and enforces the moral code of the Church. He is also the official custodian of the richly decorated parish church.

Besides this dependence on the parish priest in the religious matters which are of such vital importance in the lives of a devoutly Catholic people, the country people have traditionally looked to him for assistance in many secular fields. Until only a few decades ago, he was often one of the few literate persons in his parish. As such he was frequently asked to read and write letters.

[1] Op. cit., p. 48.

[2] Mitchell estimates that the Church owns 22 per cent of the agricultural land in Malta and 12 per cent in Gozo. See Peter K. Mitchell, *The Maltese Farm*, vol. II of *Studies in the Agrarian Geography of Malta* (mimeographed; Dept. of Geography, Durham Colleges in the University of Durham, 1959), p. 130.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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557 Most of the procuratorships and offices in the associations con-
793 nected with the Church are conferred upon members of the circle
794 of persons who figuratively, and often physically, surround the parish priest. They become his favourites by doing some of the hundred and one odd jobs for which he depends on volunteers. These include running messages, carrying chairs, arranging meetings and decorating the streets for feasts and other important occasions, such as the visit of the Archbishop. Acceptance into the circle and the rewards meted out vary, of course, according to the capabilities of the individuals concerned, and the character of the parish priest. Advancement is most rapid and the rewards most interesting where the parish priest is open to influence, and the job-seeker has the qualities of leadership discussed below. But people are loath to see their parish priest delegate too much of his authority to their fellows. Those who pursue power in the community by attaching themselves to the parish priest often incur a good measure of hostility. Most frequently they are accused by the village gossips of lining their pockets with their neighbour's money.

794 The most important member of the circle surrounding the
[796] parish priest in Kortin is old Manwel, a retired school teacher. As procurator of the Confraternity of our Lady of Sorrows, he collects funds for and organizes the elaborate Good Friday procession. This is an event which attracts visitors from all over the island. He is also procurator of the Confraternity of St. Joseph, the village cemetery and the Mass legacies of the parish. He is one of the founders and a former vice-president and secretary of the Social Club, and a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.
[575] Though no longer in the Band Club, he was once on its committee. For many years he was also on the committee which organized the annual festa. All these offices give him a greater voice in the administration of the parish and its ceremonial affairs than anyone except the parish priest.

IV

575 The officers of the secular associations in a village generally enjoy
[554] high standing and wield considerable influence. The secular associations, though they vary, generally include a men's social club (usually a brass band club), a political party committee or

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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3. Confraternity members resting during procession

[facing p. 48]

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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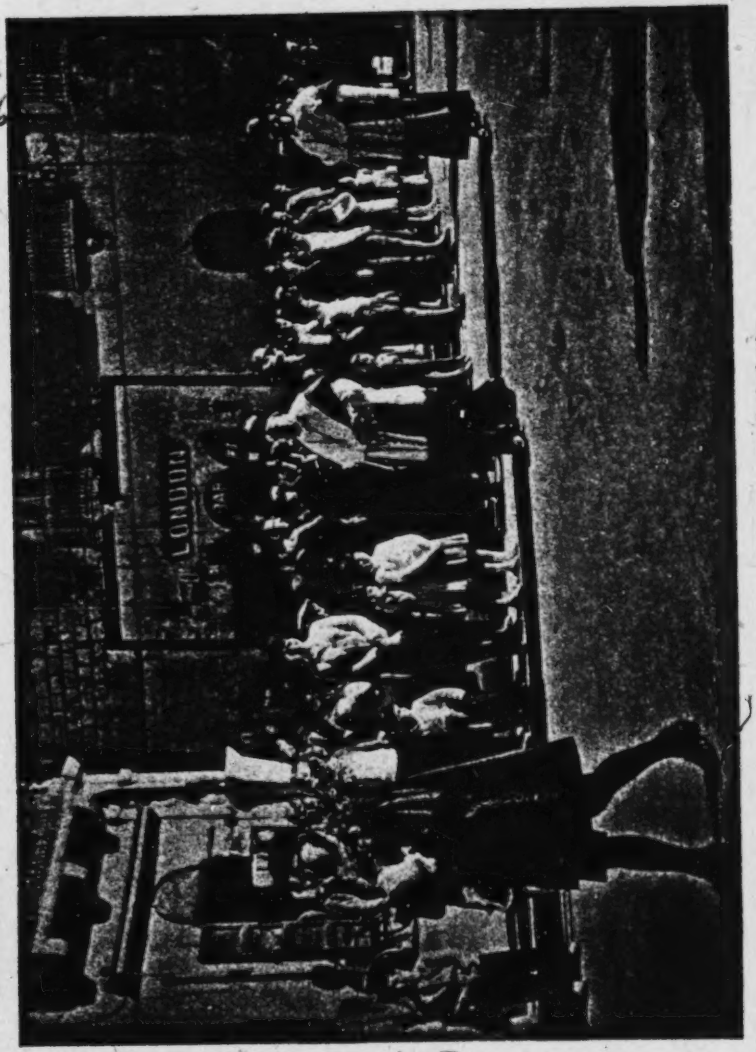

4. Mace and canons of the Gozo Cathedral Chapter

[facing p. 49]

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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[p. 55]

CHAPTER V

The Church and Village Politics

Most Maltese regulate their lives by the daily and monthly cycle of religious activities. The major divisions of the day are rung from the bells of the village church. They first ring the Paternoster half an hour before the first Mass. Then the Angelus bell rings a call to prayer at eight in the morning, at noon and at sunset. The final bell of the day is rung two or three hours after sunset, and is a brief request for the living to remember the dead in their prayers. The call of the Angelus is observed by many. When it is rung, work and conversation stop whether in a government office or a village café, men remove their hats, and someone among them leads them in a short prayer. In Gozo I have seen a busy square become suddenly silent and many people kneel in the street as the Ave Maria was rung at sunset. People also often kneel in the streets when the bells announce the elevation of the Host during a sung Mass, and during Benediction in the evening. And finally, late in the evening, clusters of relatives and neighbours can be seen sitting in their open doorways reciting the Rosary together before they go to bed.

Most girls and women and many boys and men attend one of the three or four daily Masses which are offered in all parish churches between four and seven in the morning. Virtually every one in the village attends one of the five or six Masses offered on Sundays. The few who do not attend are known to the village, and are the subject of gossip and other social pressure. Since the recent dispute between the MLP and the Church, however, their numbers are increasing.

As the church bells mark the important hours of the day, so the principal divisions of the year are set out by the annual national and parochial religious feasts and processions. Besides being major religious occasions, they are eagerly looked forward to as recreational events. Though secular spectacles, such as political rallies, the government-run Carnival procession and, above all, the

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 [541] [546] [655] cinema, are becoming increasingly important, the principal amusements of the Maltese still generally have some connection with their religious ceremonies. The French Consul in Malta at the beginning of the last century described this enjoyment of religion with great eloquence:

> Le Maltais a de la religion au fond de l'âme; cette religion, dont il remplit les devoirs sans ostentation, il l'aime autant plus qu'elle prend sa source, non seulement dans une foi sincère, mais encore dans cette habitude, contractée dès l'enfance, de chercher au sein des cérémonies religieuses un délassement, que les autres peuples trouvent dans les spectacles et les réjouissances publiques.[1]

People from all parishes come to take part in the diocesan celebrations of St. Joseph the Worker, Corpus Christi and Christ the King. These rallies and processions are usually held in Valletta and Floriana. The national festival of St. Paul's Shipwreck in February, which is also the titular feast of a Valletta parish, draws many people into the city. Another national feast commemorates the lifting of the great Turkish siege in 1565. This feast coincides with that of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary on September 8, and is celebrated with boat races and other aquatic competitions in the Grand Harbour. But the traditional national festivals for the country people are the feasts of St. Gregory in April and SS. Peter and Paul (*L-Imnarja*) in June. Though most of the pageantry of the former has been abolished, the custom of going for a picnic to Marsaxlokk, the little village just beyond the terminal point of the procession in Żejtun, lingers on. On the occasion of the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, thousands proceed to the Buskett, Malta's only wood, where they spend most of the night before the feast eating, drinking and singing. On the feast day they throng to see the agricultural show in the Buskett, the religious procession in Mdina and the bareback horse races that take place just outside Rabat. While these two feasts are the occasions for special outings for the villagers, they are generally looked upon as very low affairs by many from the professional and middle classes.

[543] [541]

The principal religious spectacles, however, are those which are organized at the village level. During the course of a year in Kortin, for example, there are fourteen major celebrations and

[1] M. Miège, *Histoire de Malte* (3 vols., Paris, Paulin, 1840), III, 168.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

religious processions. The greatest concentration of ceremonies is around Easter. This cycle starts with the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows on the Friday before Palm Sunday. Virtually all the inhabitants escort the statue through the principal streets of the village. This is followed by the Palm Sunday procession around the church square.[1] On Maundy Thursday there is a long service during which the parish priest washes the feet of twelve village laymen. Immediately after this the church is draped completely in black damask, and a huge wooden rattle replaces the church bells as a sign of mourning. On Maundy Thursday and on Good Friday in the morning, family groups visit the church and, passing before the statues depicting scenes from the Passion, stop to pray before the elaborate Sepulchre constructed in one of the chapels. Members of each of the village associations and clubs visit the Sepulchre in groups. Many families make pilgrimages to the churches in the twelve other parishes which hold Good Friday processions. At each one they offer prayers before the Sepulchre and pause to examine the statues and funereal hangings of their rivals before going on. All morning visitors from outside stream into Kortin to see the church. Then, at about two in the afternoon, there is a three-hour sermon on the Passion. This is followed by the Good Friday procession.

Old Manwel, the procurator, directs the procession. This is his big day. During the preceding weeks, he and Anton and Pawlu, the two men who take charge of decorating the parish for special occasions, worked very hard getting ready the eight statues, assembling the ornate Sepulchre and collecting the £90 required to meet the expenses of the Holy Week. Since he became procurator twenty years ago, Manwel has collected almost £3,000 for new statues, costumes, banners and black damask for the church. The procession itself lasts about three hours. Some 420 men and youths from the village carry and escort the eight huge statues. Some of the men have carried the same statue for years. The ten who carry the statue of the Crucifixion have protected their right to do so by a notarized contract with the parish priest. In return they have spent almost £200 over the past ten years to

[1] Instead of palm fronds, olive branches are distributed to the faithful. It is generally believed that if these blessed branches are burned, their smoke is particularly effective against the harmful effects of the evil eye. Farmers pass burning leaves through their cattle sheds, and I have met professionals who do the same to their salons before cocktail parties.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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repair and improve the statue and its pedestal. The procession also includes a dozen or so masked penitents who walk barefooted or crawl the length of the procession route dragging heavy chains behind them. It is a most solemn and impressive spectacle.

Very early on Easter morning the bells ring out the announcement of the Resurrection, and the sacristan, helped by Anton and Pawlu, removes the black damask from the church walls and sacred pictures. Later in the morning the procession with the statue of the Risen Christ passes through the village.

II

Of all the village feasts, the most important is always that of the patron saint of the parish church. The patron or titular saint of a church is the saint under whose special protection its founders have placed it. The titular of the parish church thus becomes the patron saint and protector of the village. In addition to the more usual religious ceremonies and processions, the people express their devotion to their patron with band marches and tremendous displays of fireworks. These celebrations provide the chief public entertainment of the countryside.

But the annual festa is more than a superior religious feast and a time of amusement for the village; it is also an event upon which village prestige depends. During the feast thousands of people crowd in from every part of the island. All these visitors have definite ideas on how a good festa should be run, and nothing they see or hear escapes their critical attention. The decoration of the church, the lighting of the streets, the quantity and firing rhythm of the exploding rockets are compared with those of their own and other feasts. The reputation of the village depends upon their judgement. This is a matter which concerns everyone, and the village draws together to display itself to the outsiders in the most favourable light. House fronts are repainted and new clothes are bought or made. The church is illuminated, the interior is hung with red damask and its treasures are placed on display. Every year the village tries to acquire at least one new work of art for this display. The principal streets and the square are lined with vividly painted papier mâché statues of prophets and saints, interspersed with urns from which sprout dazzling branches of electric light. Overhead, scores of colourful arches, strung from

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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house to house, transform the streets into gaily lighted tunnels. The piazza is usually draped in flags, and all the clubs are also dressed in their festal finery and their doors thrown open to the public. Many bands are hired and the mountains of fireworks are fused and made ready. All this is done before the visitors from outside arrive, and involves a great deal of organization, time and money.

The festa is thus an occasion on which communal values are reaffirmed and strengthened, as individuals and groups express their loyalty to their patron saint and unite to defend and enhance the reputation of their village. At the same time, the central position which the Church occupies in the social structure is strongly reinforced, for the parish church is the hub around which this festive occasion turns.

A festa is also an occasion on which the bonds of kinship are reinforced, for each family opens its doors to its relations, especially to those who live in other villages. Grown sons and daughters return to their parental home, forming, for a few hours, a grand family with a depth of three or four generations. Because of this influx of relatives, younger children learn to recognize more distant relatives whom they might not see at any other time of the year, and become aware of the network of kin relations that stretches out from their home. As parents become momentarily more indulgent during the festa and relax their watchfulness, it is also a favourite meeting time for courting couples and a traditional occasion on which marriageable boys and girls are introduced to one another.

The celebration of a village festa usually lasts three days. It consists of religious ceremonies, which take place principally within the church, and secular celebrations outside the church. The Maltese themselves make a distinction between these two elements in the festa: they call the former the 'internal feast' (*il-festa ta' ġewwa*) and the latter the 'external feast' (*il-festa ta' barra*). These often take place simultaneously. The mixture of sacred and profane which results was shown to me very vividly during one of the first festas I attended. I was in the church during a particularly solemn moment in the service of worship. Suddenly there was a nerve-shattering burst of fireworks from the roof of the church. Then, slowly, the sharp smell of burning gunpowder began to drift in through the open doors and mingle with the pungent odour of candles and incense. After that I ceased to be

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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796 [123] aware of their separateness, and realized that both incense and gunpowder were ingredients basic to the celebration of a festa.

The actual celebration of the feast can be divided into three parts: the Triduum or Novena – the three to nine days of spiritual preparation which precede the feast day – the eve of the feast, and the day of the feast. As the feast is usually celebrated on a Sunday so that more people can come, the Triduum days are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. High Mass is offered on these days, and in the evenings outside priests often come to preach sermons on religious topics related to the life of the patron saint. They are also days of preparation during which the elaborate street decorations are hoisted into place. Throughout the day the village is psychologically conditioned to the festa by salvoes of aerial bombs which are often timed to coincide with the ringing [533] of the Paternoster and the Angelus. On the last day of the Triduum, after the final sermon, the village band marches through the main streets. Often the band is preceded by a mass of dancing and shouting enthusiasts of both sexes, who wave coloured scarves, silver loving cups and other symbols of their loyalty to [578] their band and their saint. In villages where there are competing [575] band clubs, this demonstration often provokes fights between rival supporters. These skirmishes are usually sparked off by the bands of girls who hoarsely shout themselves into a frenzy proclaiming the virtues of their saint and the shortcomings of their rivals. There are no visitors during this part of the feast.

On Saturday, the eve of the feast, there is a High Mass and Te Deum to mark the end of the Triduum. This is usually followed by a barrage of aerial fireworks. The local band then often marches through the village, stopping at all the clubs for drinks. [273] This march is usually quite gay but in some villages it degenerates into a drunken spree. During the day, outside priests are brought [783] in specially for the festa to hear confessions in the church. In the late afternoon, visitors begin to arrive to watch the Translation, a ceremony during which the celebrant, usually the Bishop, takes a relic of the saint on a short procession outside the church. After [533] the Translation, the various guest bands march through the village and then settle down to play selections from operas and works composed by Maltese bandmasters. The many relatives and friends of the bandsmen join the gaily dressed crowds who have been streaming in by bus and car or on foot.

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For several hours they wander up and down the principal streets, past the nougat vendors, past the dazzling houses with their doors and shutters thrown open to attract the eyes of all to festal drapes and carpets, gleaming cookers and new refrigerators. The crowd moves on past the packed bars and through the festooned clubs, their silver trophies all on show. Stopping now and then to eat and drink and talk with friends, they move into the church and past the banks of flowers that stand before the statue of the patron saint. From there, now surrounded by the red damask and the cut-glass crowns suspended from the golden ceilings, they pass before the silver altar-front and gaze at the jewel-encrusted reliquaries on display beside it. Now and then there is a soft discussion of price and craftsmanship as a new picture or silver candlestick reaches past the guttering candles for the attention of the crowd. Slowly, for many stop to kneel and say a prayer, the people move out through the door and past the bandstand, and on to make the round again.

The climax of the evening comes at eleven o'clock, when the forest of standing fireworks which have been planted in the square is lighted, and the second day of the festa closes in a shower of sparks and acrid smoke.

On the morning of the feast-day, there is a Solemn High Mass during which some noted clerical orator delivers a lengthy and bombastic panegyric of the saint. After the service the committees of the various clubs make formal calls on each other and exchange hospitality. The parish priest and the village clergy also call on each of the clubs and associations. Following this, the people retire to their houses for huge luncheons with their close relatives. In the late afternoon the long procession with the statue of the saint slowly moves from the church. The saint, carried by white-robed members of the confraternities, stops on the threshold to take the salute of 21 petards and barrage of smaller rockets, the *kaxxa infernal*, which often last up to twenty minutes.[1] As the saint at last leaves the church he is cheered on his way by groups of shouting devotees. The crowds are thicker than the night before, and amuse themselves in much the same way. There are also more bands, and sometimes as many as five will be

[1] These petards are usually immense. They are often made from half-gallon tins packed with gelignite that is either stolen or extracted from dud shells and bombs fished up from military target areas by festa enthusiasts. Occasionally their explosions break windows.

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796 competing for the attention of the crowd within a few yards of [533] each other.

All the while, the procession, followed by a few black-clad [292] penitents, solemnly passes through the main streets of the village. [481] Often those carrying the saint move with a shuffling step that causes him to bob and turn as though he were dancing. As he passes under balconies his cheering and clapping admirers shower him with confetti. Then, as the procession nears the church, the final *kaxxa infernal*, this time of coloured rockets, is touched off. In some villages the saint is turned around so that he can see this barrage and the display of multi-staged rockets that follows it. The statue then enters the church and the Benediction is given. After this the crowd of visitors quickly disperses. Soon the inhabitants have the village to themselves again. As the women and girls wheel and pull the children off to bed, the men carry around from club to club the grimy, soot-stained men who made and fired the fireworks. They are the heroes of the hour. Other men seek out their clubs or usual cafés and toast one another and the success of their feast. So ends the festa for another year.

796 The organization of the annual festa requires a long period of 793 planning and preparation. This work calls for a certain degree of [794] centralization. In most villages the parish priest controls the organization of both the internal and the external feasts. In some villages, however, he delegates some of this work to a procurator, usually a priest, but occasionally to a committee of leading per- [575] sonalities of the village. In other villages, all the details of the external feast, including the fund raising, are handled by the band club committees. In any case, the parish priest always has the last word. Sometimes there is friction between him and other interested parties over organizational details.

796 The cost of these feasts varies considerably. It is naturally 794 related to the size of the village and to the degree of enthusiasm 435 with which the festa is celebrated. It ranges from a few shillings per family in a large urban parish to as much as £15 per family in a small rural parish celebrating a particularly important festa. The average cost to the community, however, is about £1,000. The organizers of the festa collect the necessary funds by means of lotteries, fairs, special appeals and a small weekly contribution of threepence or sixpence from each family. Most fund raisers also solicit pledges from leading citizens and enter their names and the

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sums pledged on a long list. This method, called *l-arbural*, permits donors to compare their contributions with those of others. Then there may be several unofficial groups who raise funds for fireworks, which they manufacture and fire as their special contributions to the feast.

While I was living in Farrug, the village celebrated the centenary of St. Martin, the titular saint of the parish. The festa cost a total of £1,465. Of this sum the parish priest raised and spent £302 for the elaborate internal feast, of which he took complete charge. The rest, some £1,163, was collected and spent on the external feast by the committee of the St. Martin Band Club. The fireworks, including most of the gunpowder, were made illegally by the members of the club in their houses and in sheds and abandoned quarries surrounding the village. The cost of the raw materials amounted to £712. Committee members divided the actual work among themselves, and set up sub-committees dealing with decoration, music, fireworks and fund-raising. With the exception of the extra lighting for the streets and the church, which was done by an outside contractor, all the work involved in the festa was done by local inhabitants.

In Kortin, on the other hand, the parish priest personally controls every aspect of the festa. With the assistance of the Sodality of Our Lady, he collects all the funds. Most of the street decoration is done by Anton and Pawlu, who get a number of people to help them. In the following table, I have summarized the rather complicated accounts of the 1961 festa in Kortin.

TABLE 3. Kortin 1961 Festa Accounts

INCOME	£ s.	EXPENSES	£ s.
Internal Feast		*Internal Feast*	
Collections	143 10	Music	150 0
Special gifts	121 10	Other	50 0
External Feast		*External Feast*	
Three collections	221 10	Decorations, programmes, etc.	39 14
Weekly 3d.	120 0	Fireworks: crackers and ground display only	105 16
Lotteries	90 0	Bands: 8 performances	224 10
'Arbural'	53 0	Lighting	170 0
		Balance	9 10
Total	£749 10	*Total*	£749 10

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In addition to the sums which the parish priest spent on fireworks, another £472 was collected by six groups of enthusiasts and spent on raw materials for the fireworks which they manufactured. The total cost to the village was thus £1,212. In all respects this was an average festa for a village of 5,000.

The festa in Kortin has not always been controlled by the parish priest. Dun Bert, the present incumbent, had something of a struggle to seize and hold the reins of authority. Until he took over the parish eight years ago the external festa had been run by a committee. Though the parish priest was *ex officio* head of this committee, the actual affairs of the committee were run by old Manwel and the father of the curate, who was general manager of the festa for over thirty years. The committee also included the latter's wife's father and brother in its membership. His brother was killed twenty-five years ago in an explosion which wrecked the village's officially licensed firework factory and killed four others. This committee used to book the bands, repaint, erect and store the decorations and collect all the funds for the external feast. One of its major responsibilities was to run the two large fund-raising fairs which were held every year in the school. Next to the festa, these fairs were the favourite amusement of the village. Thus when Dun Bert arrived in Kortin, he found his was only a nominal role as far as the external festa was concerned. As he is a man who likes to run things his own way, the arrangement did not suit him. Moreover, he was concerned with the financial position of the parish, and in particular with the interest on the £3,000 that his predecessor had borrowed from the Curia to help finance the unfinished parish hall. To be able to meet all the parish's financial commitments, he felt that he had to have control of all its financial resources. The first year, however, he did very little about it.

During his second year in Kortin, the newly elected Labour Government came to his assistance, albeit unwittingly. The new Minister of Education refused permission to the organizers of the Kortin festa to hold a public fair in the school. This deprived the organizers of their major source of income, and threatened the festa. Dun Bert quickly took over the financial management of the festa and made two house-to-house collections. These raised the necessary funds and saved the festa. He then gave to the Sodality of Our Lady the responsibility of collecting threepence a week from each household. But for six months of the year these

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CHAPTER VI
Festa Partiti

578 621 Village unity is an ideal, and all villages try to present a tightly united front to the outside world. In spite of this, all are divided internally by cleavages which cut across the community at various levels. Some of these divisions are only temporary, and disappear when the issues out of which they have arisen are resolved. Others, which may have arisen out of temporary issues, have for one reason or another become a permanent part of the social scene. But regardless of their origin or duration, these divisions are painfully real to the villagers. Persons made vulnerable through a network of personal relations are often forced to commit themselves to a particular division. In doing so, they become opposed to neighbours and kinsmen who are committed to the other side. [602] This is one of the characteristics of life in all small villages. It is particularly true of communities, such as those in Malta, in which the inhabitants are closely related through kinship and affinity.

192 578 621 [665] [794] The Maltese call these divisions *partiti* (sing., *partit*). The term thus corresponds not only to groups of the order which we in English would call 'parties', but also to those to which we would apply the term 'factions'. Political parties are called partiti, and so are rival groups such as the two in Kortin which competed over the rebuilding of the church. Partiti are said to have *pika* between them. *Pika* denotes relations of competition, ill-feeling, hostility. There is little about the word which suggests the good-natured competition that can exist between rival school football or cricket teams. On the contrary, if there is *pika* between two groups, a no-holds-barred competition is expected. Partiti are thus considered to be a bad thing. They disrupt the harmony of the community and make it more difficult to project the ideal image of village unity to the outside world.

575 578 621 794 796 The oldest permanent division that exists in the villages is between the supporters of rival band clubs. This division is related to the cult of saints. In the previous chapter it was noted that

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besides the patron saint, parishes celebrate many other saints. The feasts of these secondary saints are normally not as lavish as the annual festa of the patron. But many villages celebrate two large festas: one for the titular saint of the parish, and the other for a secondary saint who has assumed almost equal social importance. Where this occurs, a village is divided into two partiti, each of which has its own band club and celebrates one of the saints. The partiti compete over almost every aspect of the festa, including the decoration of the streets, the adornment of the statue, the number of guest bands and, above all, the fireworks. Even the exact number of communicants, the size of candles and the quantity of light bulbs illuminating the façade of the church often become the subject of dispute. Farrug is divided by this type of rivalry. One partit is dedicated to St. Martin, the titular of the parish, the other to St. Roque.

The origins of these festa partiti, where they can be traced, are very much alike. Most of them came into existence sometime between 1850 and the turn of the century, and most arose out of disputes between persons concerned with the celebration of the titular festa and those interested in the cult of some lesser saint. The latter were usually members of the confraternity dedicated to that saint.[1] These factions in time became centred on separate social clubs, and eventually acquired brass bands. The clubs provided a permanent institutional basis for the rivalry. As time went on, the partiti became more violent in their disputes and in the pressure they put upon individuals to support them. Finally in 1935, the Church, long alarmed at the extremes to which the devotion to some saints had been carried in certain villages, took steps to eliminate the competition. It promulgated a series of regulations designed to reduce the scale on which secondary feasts could be celebrated. These stipulated that for secondary feasts there was to be no Translation of Holy Relics on the eve of the feast, that only the church and the area immediately adjacent to it could

[1] Cf. Rob. Mifsud Bonnici, *Ġaġjo Tal-Mużika F'Malta u Ghardex* (Malta, Giov. Muscat, 1954), pp. 38 f. He suggests that these partiti developed out of a dispute between persons who wanted to play sacred music by the Maltese composer Vincenzo Bugeja (1806–60) and those who preferred that of his rival, Paolo Nani (1814–1904). As far as I could determine, however, the only partiti which arose directly out of this dispute are those in Żebbuġ. On the other hand, many rival partiti, once established, played the music of either Bugeja or Nani during their feasts. The former took a star as their symbol, the latter an eagle. Today partiti in many villages are still nicknamed either *tal-istilla* or *tal-ajkla* after this once-important division.

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of new associations in the village and the increased activity of political parties.

During the mid-'fifties emigration drained away many of the most active supporters of the partiti. In 1954 alone, no fewer than two dozen men between 18 and 38 left the village for Australia and Canada. Each club lost key bandsmen, and the two bands, already heavily bolstered with outside players, never recovered. A constantly improving bus service enabled young men to go to the 'talkies' in other villages, or just stroll up and down Kingsway in Valletta – a very popular pastime with young people from all over Malta – instead of spending the evening in their village clubs. During this period the Football Club, MUSEUM and Catholic Action were established in the village and began to draw potential partit leaders into other spheres of activity. The Football Club was particularly damaging in this respect. As a neutral social club it provided a place where the young men of the two partiti, who normally never entered one another's clubs, could meet. A number of friendships developed between them, and it soon became the most popular club in the village. Finally, the increased activity of the national political parties during the elections in 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1955 drew the attention of the villagers away from purely parochial concerns and bound them up in rivalries of a different order, which often cut across traditional allegiances. This created factions within the clubs and weakened the partiti.

Rivalry flared up again in 1960, when the supporters of St. Martin, intent upon celebrating the centenary of their patron, staged the greatest festa in the history of the village. But the political and religious fervour of the 1961 election campaign soon captured the attention of the partisans, and the festa of the following year was a pale shadow of the gala spectacle of the year before.

Before proceeding any further, we must unravel the rather complicated tangle of partit, club and confraternity. All festa partiti are composed of three groups: (i) the band club, which provides the leadership of the partit and includes most of the active male supporters, many of whom are also members of (ii) the confraternity allied with the partit or dedicated to its patron, and (iii) the rank and file of men, women and children who are members neither of the confraternity nor of the club, but still support the partit against its rival. The central strand running through all

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these groups is the loyalty of the people to the partit and its patron, shown by supporting the many activities that the leaders organize, and by boycotting similar activities of their rivals. These include fund-raising lotteries and fairs, weekly collections and partit picnics and pilgrimages. During the festa, supporters march with the statue, dress themselves and their houses up and in general celebrate their patron. Their rivals often walk about unshaven and glowering, and do not normally decorate their houses.

Although most people in a village divided by this type of rivalry will choose, or be forced, to take sides, a few are able to avoid this commitment, or at least say they have. These are often priests and teachers, who sometimes find it to their advantage to remain neutral, as do outsiders who have married into the village. Museum members are not permitted to maintain partit affiliation though, of course, many do. Neutral people contribute to both feasts. A true partisan would never contribute to the external feast of his rival, although he might give something to the parish priest for the internal feast. During periods of intense rivalry, even these contributions cease. Thus, virtually the entire £1,465 which St. Martin's centenary cost was contributed by his supporters alone. Six months later their rivals spent £600 on the feast of St. Roque.

The band club is the organizational and social centre of a partit. All members of the club are supporters of the partit, but not all supporters of the partit are members of the club, though nonmembers are normally welcome to come and use its facilities. To a certain extent, membership of the club depends upon the availability of ready cash, for many men are reluctant to part with the subscription fee as long as they can make use of the club's premises. Though the confraternities are open to all adults without regard to partit affiliation, there is normally a positive correlation between partit and confraternity membership. Generally speaking, the supporters of the titular feast enrol in the older confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Rosary. These confraternities are established in all parishes, and play an important part in many religious ceremonies. Supporters of the secondary patron enrol in the confraternity dedicated to him, if they feel inclined to join one.

These general principles can be illustrated by data collected in Farrug. Table No. 4 below shows the relative strengths of the two

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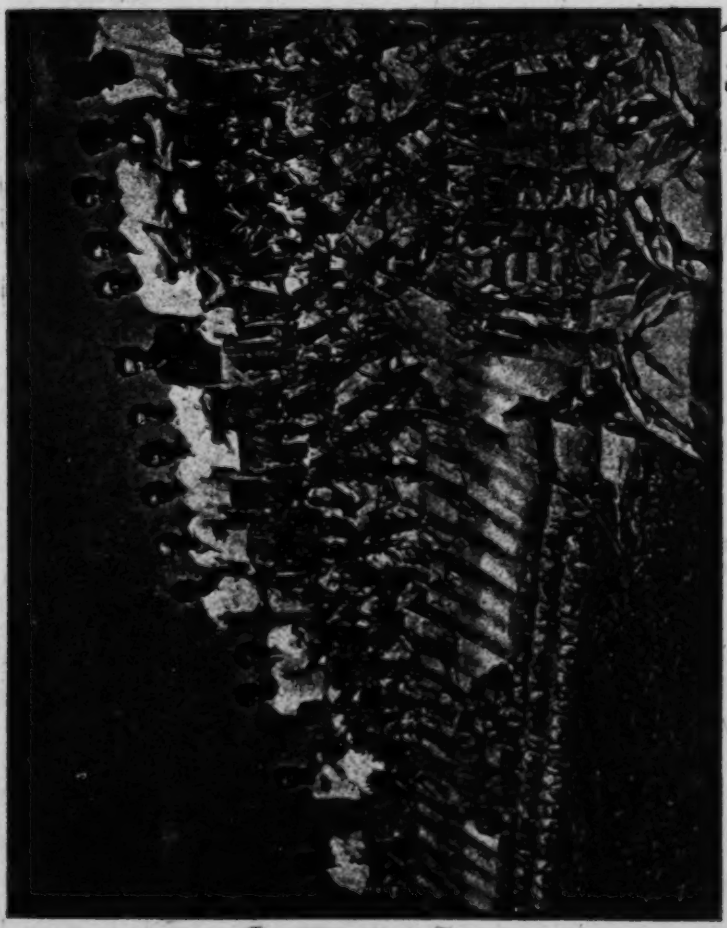

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796

5. Fireworks for the feast of St Leonard

[facing P. 80]

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residence pattern is certainly true in Farrug, and I observed much the same thing in other villages divided by festa partiti. In Farrug, 65 per cent of the people living on the main square and the four streets leading into it supported St. Martin, but only 46 per cent of those living in other parts of the village did so.

Disputes between partiti usually concern matters of precedence or their ability to display devotion to their saints. Each partit has certain rights, usually secured at the cost of clashes with its rival. These include the position and participation of the club and confraternity in Church processions and at other functions, the routes over which these processions travel and the possession of certain property and its display in the parish church. Any attempt to extend or reduce them is resisted by the partit affected, which takes action to protect its interests by trying to influence the Church authorities, who must make the final decisions.

The structural position of a partit determines the kind of pressure that it can bring to bear upon the Church. Those of titular saints are, in a sense, the establishment parties. As we have seen, the Church seeks to build up their celebrations at the expense of the secondary ones. Hence a titular partit can negotiate from a strong position: its ultimate sanction is refusal to participate in the feast of the village patron, an event which the Church is anxious to see celebrated with great pomp. Secondary partiti, on the other hand, are inherently opposed to the Church in matters of festa policy. They try to increase the scale of their feasts, while the Church tries to reduce them. They dare not cancel their feasts for fear that the Church would accuse them of making trouble and suppress them, as it did the secondary festas of Our Lady of Lourdes in Qrendi, and St. Michael in Żabbar.

Their position in opposition to Church policy has given most secondary partiti a certain *esprit de corps* and unity of purpose that their rivals often lack. This has made them better able to withstand the divisive effects of the political factions which have recently weakened many of their rivals. It has also generally resulted in the emergence of stronger leaders. Secondary partiti are often united around a single professional class leader who can not only hold the partit together in the face of the attacks of its opponents, but can also argue intricate points of Canon Law with the monsignori at the Curia and, at times, with the Archbishop himself. As we have observed, the secondary partiti generally have

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definition of the dogma of her immaculate conception four years earlier, and to St. Joseph, who was declared patron of the Catholic Church in 1870. Virtually all the secondary partiti are dedicated to one of these two.[1] At the same time, there was a general elaboration of the celebrations connected with the cult of saints, including the Italian and Sicilian custom of having bands play during the festas.[2] These were but a part of the more general influx of Italian ideas and customs which accompanied the refugees from Italy of the Risorgimento, who streamed into Malta following 1850. The propaganda efforts of the pro-Italian politicians of the time assisted in the diffusion of these customs, especially in the urban areas.

During this period a conception of social organization new to Malta was also gaining currency, namely the idea of voluntary associations for laymen, and in particular, social clubs for 'gentlemen'. After the establishment in Valletta of the exclusive British Union Club in 1826 and the equally exclusive Casino Maltese in 1850, clubs of various kinds began to spring up in many villages. They multiplied so rapidly that a local chronicler wrote in 1890, 'Today you don't find a village without one or two, nor a city without three or five.'[3]

The latter half of the last century was a period of relative economic prosperity for Malta. This resulted from the increase in military and naval activity after the outbreak of the Crimean War; the sharp expansion in government spending on public works programmes from 1859 to 1865; and the renewed world demand for Maltese cotton as a result of the cotton shortage created by the American Civil War.[4] The economic boom increased the demand for unskilled labour from the villages. This, in turn, helped to disseminate urban-Italian cultural traits. It also provided a financial basis which permitted increased expenditure on festa decorations, fireworks, and above all, uniforms and instruments for the bands. Finally, this period saw the establishment of government schools in all the villages. City-born schoolmasters moved into rural

[1] See Appendix A.

[2] See, for example, Giuseppe Pitrè, *Feste Patronali in Sicilia*, vol. XXI of *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Populari Siciliane* (Torino-Palermo, Carlo Clausen, 1900), *passim*. He also indicates that a number of Sicilian towns and villages are divided by rivalry between supporters of different saints. (pp. xlvii ff.)

[3] P. P. Castagna, *Lis-Storia Ta Malta* (3 vols.; Valletta, C. Busuttil, 1890), III, 128.

[4] Charles A. Price, *Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration* (Melbourne, Georgian House, 1954), pp. 105 ff.

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In addition to the many new confraternities dedicated to
103 him, after 1850 (in Naxxar, Għargħur, Kirkop and Xagħra, for
175 example) he was chosen as patron of the new parish churches of
621, Kalkara, Qala and Msida. Moreover, four parishes have secondary
776 feasts dedicated to him (Rabat, Għaxaq, Kirkop and Żebbuġ).
794 Besides these Għargħur and Siġġiewi had St. Joseph partiti which
796 succumbed to the 1935 Church regulations.

The identification of secondary partiti in general with St.
621 Joseph is also perhaps reflected in the colour most have chosen as
794 their symbol. It is blue, the colour of the banner of the Con-
822 fraternity of St. Joseph. The supporters of many secondary partiti, even if their saint is the Virgin Mary, wave blue scarves about to show their loyalty to it. Their rivals display red scarves, after the colour of the banner of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, whose members support the titular saint.

463 The correlation between partiti and occupational class is also
621 shown in the high proportion of village priests who are sons of
793, families supporting the titular feasts. I once asked the leader of a
794 secondary partit why this was so. He replied that it was only natural since the families of the titular partiti were in much closer contact with the parish priest. Thus their sons, rather than those of rivals, more often became his young helpers and altar boys and received the necessary recommendations to the seminary and other church-run schools. From there, some became priests, and others assumed positions of leadership with the various associations. Other informants suggested it was because the 'best' families support the titular saints, and therefore can afford the additional school fees and loss of earning power that are involved in having their sons become priests.

Of the 41 priests born and now resident in Żurrieq, Kirkop, Qrendi, Mqabba, Luqa, Għaxaq and Żebbuġ, 33 (80 per cent) are sons of families supporting the titular feasts. This percentage gains added importance by the fact that in each of these villages the secondary partit is either equal to or larger than the titular partit. The exception is Żebbuġ, where the secondary partit is decidedly smaller than the titular one. In Farruġ, though the local priest is from a St. Roque family, all the offices connected with the parish church, and 23 of the 30 key positions with Catholic Action, the Football Club and the Labour Committee, are in the hands of St. Martin supporters. Thus the members of titular partiti are not only closer to established authority, they often become part of it.

[i.e. St. Joseph, - Analyst]

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heard. The meeting was finally called off, and the large MLP delegation from Malta was literally routed. They had to return on foot from Rabat to the ferry, as the bus drivers refused them transport. During the long walk to the ferry, the Labour partisans were ambushed and rather badly mauled by groups of men, women and children from all over Gozo. The ardour of many Gozitans had been worked up by lay leaders who toured the villages for several days beforehand. But besides their religious fervour, there was a considerable element of parochial pride, and the feeling that 'we'll show these Maltese invaders a thing or two.' In all, forty persons were reported injured. The Gozitans were extremely proud of their victory, and the local branch of the Social Action Movement published a booklet to commemorate the occasion.[1]

The activity of Labour supporters centres on their local Party club or committee, which arranges for transportation to national MLP rallies and conducts lectures and classes on the political aims of the Party. It also organizes social evenings and outings for Labour supporters. The members of the Local Committee take charge of the preparations for national meetings held in their own village. Local Committees take the initiative in preparing floats, decorated carts and companies in costume for the annual MLP demonstration on the First of May. For the past few years the MLP Executive has also organized a carnival celebration for its supporters to induce them to boycott the official government-sponsored carnival.[2] Labour supporters read the Labour daily newspaper, *Il-Helsien* (Freedom), and the Sunday *Voice of Malta*. Since the condemnation, *Il-Helsien* has become a party badge. It is pasted on bus windows during MLP excursions, worn as an armband at rallies and in general used by Labour supporters to taunt their opponents. I have even seen some young men in Kortin swagger into church on Sunday morning with copies of it sticking out of their hip pockets.

All supporters of the Labour Party do not show their allegiance this openly, for many wish to avoid the break with a large section of the community which would follow such action. Some are teachers or civil servants who fear lest their open support for the

[1] *Ghawdex Jiddefendi L-Knisja* [Gozo defends the Church] (Gozo: Social Action Movement, 1961).

[2] The government at this time was administered by a British Chief Secretary, and the MLP ordered members to stay away from all events it organized.

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178 578 621 across the village and the clubs, and has brought about conflict within many families. People lament the change that has come over the village as a result. An old bachelor friend often used to complain that had we come to live there just a few years ago, 'before politics came and spoiled everything', we would have found the village a far happier place. Picnics and outings were more frequent then, and groups of friends used to gather on hot summer evenings and stroll outside the village to play guitars and sing the lilting Maltese *ghana* in the cool air away from the houses. [575] There was also more life in the clubs. Both the Social Club and [796] the Band Club used to take part in the national carnival competition for the best decorated carts and costumed companies. But as the political conflict has divided the island's carnival celebration in two, so it has also affected the clubs. They now celebrate neither the government's carnival nor that of the MLP for fear the question of which one to participate in would provoke a fight that would cripple the club.

578 665 793 794 Dun Bert, the parish priest in Kortin, is of course the head of the local group which supports the Archbishop and opposes the MLP. His chief lieutenants in the fight are the local clergy and the lay leaders of the religious associations. Pawlu and Anton, his two faithful helpers, are also vocal partisans, as is old Manwel. Dr. Farrugia, old Manwel's son, as a former member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and a leading member of one of the political parties opposed to the MLP, also belongs to the pro-Church division in the village, though he takes little part in its day-to-day affairs. The main activity and support comes from the leaders of 275 578 665 794 the lay associations, especially of the Young Christian Workers, the MUSEUM and the Sodality of Our Lady. These all meet regularly in their respective premises. Many of the others, older men, spend much of their free time in Kelinu's café. These include old Manwel, Pawlu, Anton, the sacristan, the organist, and Dun Mikiel and Dun Filip, respectively the chaplains of the female and male sections of Catholic Action. This café, located right next to Dr. Farrugia's house, is the nicest café on the square, or in the village for that matter. It is the only one which the clergy, the teachers and occasionally Dr. Farrugia himself, frequent. It is thus the headquarters of the more influential village citizens who support the Archbishop. Most MLP supporters have stopped going to [517] it, although a few still play cards there for an hour or so in the late afternoon when they return from work.

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already noted, in Malta, it is a criminal offence to insult a minister of religion. There were no other disturbances.

The Labour rally was rather a different story. The leader of the MLP and the thousands of his supporters who came to Kortin to hear him speak received a decidedly hostile reception. Though Dun Bert did not organize a counter-demonstration for the occasion, he did arrange a mass protest meeting the evening before. The following day rival groups were out decorating. A number of MUSEUM lads under the direction of one of the older members pasted anti-MLP slogans all over the façade of the church. At the same time, a group of men were busy hanging posters and flags from the Labour club to welcome Dom Mintoff to the village.

At 4 p.m. buses and cars began to stream into the village with thousands of MLP supporters from all over the island. At about the same time the church bells began to call the faithful to a religious procession in honour of Our Lady of Fatima which Dun Bert had scheduled to take place during the Labour meeting. He himself stood in the square watching the faithful gather in the church. He also carefully observed those who passed by on their way to the Labour meeting, which was being held right behind the church. Most of the villagers who sympathized with the Labour Party but who did not support it openly did not attend the meeting. They were anxious to avoid the open break with the rest of the community which attending would have entailed. Besides, several mentioned that their confessors had told them that they would commit a mortal sin if they attended MLP meetings. All the open supporters of the MLP in the village went to the meeting.

The meeting began at about 4.30 p.m. and lasted for two hours. Shortly after it had started, Dun Bert's procession of nearly a thousand men, women and children slowly wound its way through the village and returned to the church for a period of prayer and worship. When the Labour meeting finally broke up, most of the outside supporters departed quickly, though a number were delayed because villagers had deflated the tyres of about a dozen of their cars. At this time people also began to leave the church. But the police, who were trying to keep a passage clear in the centre of the square for the stream of departing Labour supporters, kept them on the steps of the church. They waited there for a while and then began singing hymns and songs in honour of

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the Pope and the Archbishop, stopping now and then to shout insults at the passing Labour supporters. The square on the other side of the police cordon began to fill up with people returning from the meeting and others who left their houses to see what the excitement was about. Gradually the songs became louder and more excited, and the shouts hoarser. By then it was getting quite dark, but I could see Dun Mikiel in the front row, his hands thrust tensely into the pockets of his cassock, scowling at the passers-by while he smoked cigarette after cigarette. The tension by this time was almost electric. Suddenly, one of the local MLP supporters returning to the Labour club replied to a taunt by making a threatening gesture. The crowd in front of the church booed him loudly and surged forward. The police, anxious to hurry the trouble-maker off the square, pushed him a bit too hard and he stumbled and fell. This angered the crowd on the other side of the square and it began to press through the police cordon. At this point police reinforcements arrived and cleared the square in a few moments. Their prompt action prevented an ugly situation from going further, for there had been well over a thousand angry people facing each other, separated by less than two dozen unarmed policemen.

Four days after the meeting, Dun Bert organized a pilgrimage of reparation to atone for the insults of the MLP speakers. The procession of some 1,200 people reciting the Rosary escorted the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows through the area behind the church where the Labour meeting had been held. About 400 of the participants were outsiders who had come to Kortin from other parts of the island for the occasion. After the procession the crowd gathered in front of the church where a Mass was said. A noted Jesuit orator then rebutted the MLP speeches point by point. The whole affair had almost passed off without incident when a number of stones and bottles were thrown from behind walls at the buses and cars leaving the village.

But if there are relatively few face-to-face meetings of this kind in Kortin or elsewhere, there are many disputes that divide and weaken the clubs and associations. This matter has particularly affected Sur Gorg, the president of the Social Club, who feels responsible for preserving its unity in these difficult times. In Kelinu's, where many of the influential regulars are members of the Social Club, they say that it has become a Mintoff stronghold.

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Many of them have stopped going there. In point of fact, Sur Gorg and the secretary are strongly opposed to the Labour Party, though many of the younger men and some of the most active older members support it. A number of people living nearby have complained that members praise Mintoff in loud voices. There is growing pressure on Sur Gorg to ban all political conversation there. He has so far resisted the pressure, for he believes that if he were to give in, he would drive away the very members who form the backbone of the club. His chief problem, as he described it to me, is how to focus the attention of the members on something other than politics. He is therefore doing his best to obtain the permits necessary to open the theatre for which they have been planning and saving for years. He feels that in the excitement of building, the members will forget their political differences and reunite, and thus the club will pass safely through this crisis. But the permits have been slow in coming and meanwhile the pressure on him is building up. Two important members of the committee have already resigned, 'under the influence of those busy-bodies in Kelinu's', as some members described it.

The men in charge of the St. Martin Band Club in Farrug face much the same problem. As has already been noted, most of the leaders of the two political blocs in the village are members of the St. Martin club, and several of them are on its committee. This difference of political loyalty often provokes quarrels over matters of policy. During the centenary, for example, the committee were sharply divided over whether to salute the Archbishop with the customary barrage of fireworks when he entered the village to take part in the ceremony. The matter was put to a vote, and the MLP faction won. The disgruntled losers began talking about firing off their own salute of welcome. But the crisis that this action would have brought about was avoided when the Vicar-General officiated in place of the Archbishop, who was indisposed. As the MLP supporters had nothing against him, he received the full barrage of aerial bombs and fire crackers. The rift was thus healed, and all joined in to celebrate a rousing feast.

The following year the festa again brought a crisis with it. This time it was a far more serious one. Most of the young Labour supporters, in retaliation for the way the Church had attacked their party and its leaders, flatly refused to have anything to do with the feast. These young men included virtually all the partit's

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fireworkers, and without their expert help it was feared that the feast would be a miserable failure. Many Labour supporters also instructed their parents and wives not to contribute money to the feast. This depressing state of affairs continued for some time.

Then one day, about three months before the festa, Pietru, the young schoolteacher who is head of Catholic Action and treasurer of the St. Martin club, came up to me looking very pleased. He said that the feast was saved. Several events had combined to work up interest in it. It seems that most of the people had attended a large and very successful titular festa in a neighbouring village; the St. Roque fireworkers had shot off three extremely well-made test rockets; and he himself had played his tape recording of the St. Martin hymn, the anthem of the partit, over a loud-speaker in the square. These events revived interest in the festa and in the reputation of the partit. Immediately afterwards the secretary of the club, a Labour supporter who has set politics aside for the honour of the partit, called a committee meeting to discuss the problem of making fireworks. After several speeches urging members to keep their politics from spoiling the feast, the committee voted to make fireworks. Though two skilled fireworkers crossed the floor and agreed to help, none of the many experts among the rank and file followed suit. But soon after this political loyalty again began to smother the rekindled partit spirit, and one of the fireworkers all but dropped out. Moreover, Pietru, who is the village's most eloquent and outspoken enemy of the Labour Party, began to preach so vehemently to those he calls the 'lost sheep' of the club, that he antagonized many. His fund-raising suffered as a result.

About a month after this I met Toni at a festa in a neighbouring village, and we had a long talk away from the interested eyes and ears of Farrug. Toni has been a member of the St. Martin Club committee for nearly twenty years, and until some months ago had been vice president. He was clearly very worried about the club. People were already beginning to draw parallels between the present situation and the events that led up to the split in 1930. He said he was doing his best to discourage such talk, and had now begun working hard to avoid an open break.

He pointed out that he had experienced many crises in the partit and favoured a less blunt approach to winning back the interest of the MLP members than did the crusading Pietru. He felt that he

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had already had some success wooing members back on a personal basis by talking only of the honour of the partit and leaving politics out altogether. He stressed that the main problem was not so much the feast but the survival of the club. 'If we can just weather out the storm until after the election we can save it.' He went on to describe how it had taken years to heal the division after the seceding Strickland supporters had rejoined in 1935. 'We must avoid a split at all costs, and the only way we can do that is to bury our political differences.' His technique for doing this was to have as few formal committee meetings as possible, to avoid discussing controversial subjects and to vote in secret, for in these times 'an open vote divides the members'.

The wise counsel and efforts of the older members, who have set politics aside, has so far kept the younger hot-heads from splitting the club. In spite of all the obstacles in its way, the feast of St. Martin turned out to be a good show. Though many supporters did not contribute, others gave more than usual and there were enough funds for a good feast. About a dozen boys worked under the direction of the two adult fireworkers, and made most of the fireworks. They gave a very good account of themselves, though not one of them is old enough (18) to join the club as a formal member. All are Catholic Action members. In fact, except for a few St. Roque boys, they are the only ones left in the society. The Catholic Action group once numbered almost fifty. The others, the sons of Labour families, had been forced out by the vote of loyalty to the Archbishop which the association's national headquarters had demanded. But their enthusiasm could not quite make up for their youth or their lack of numbers. During the Friday demonstration for the saint some outsiders who were supporters of the guest band had to help them carry the statue of their patron part of the way. This was a great comedown from the previous year, when his followers were so numerous that they had to struggle for a turn to carry him. But the noise and the gay atmosphere of the celebration rekindled the interest of a number of the Labour supporters. Several helped to erect the decorations on Saturday; a few even joined in one of the band matches.

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[p.141]

Appendix A

Festa and Band Club Partiti

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	Titular Feast	*Band Club*	*Secondary Feast*	*Band Club*
A. FESTA AND BAND CLUB RIVALRY				
GHAXAQ	The Assumption	'St. Mary'	St. Joseph	'St. Joseph'
GUDJA[1]	O/L of the Rosary	'La Stella'	O/L of Consolation	'O/L of Consolation'
KIRKOP	St. Leonard	'St. Leonard'	St. Joseph	'St. Joseph'
LUQA	St. Andrew	'St. Andrew'	O/L of Consolation	'Union'
MQABBA	The Assumption	'King George V'	O/L of the Lily	'Lily'
QRENDI	The Assumption	'St. Mary'	O/L of Lourdes	'Lourdes'
RABAT	St. Paul	'Count Roger'	St. Joseph[2] (Franciscans)	'L'Isle Adam'
VITTORIOSA	St. Lawrence	'Duke of Edinburgh'	St. Dominic[2] (Dominicans)	'Prince of Wales'
ŻEBBUĠ	St. Philip	'St. Philip' 'St. Philip's Festivities and Social Club'	St. Joseph	'De Rohan'
ŻURRIEQ	St. Catherine	'St. Catherine'	O/L of Mount Carmel	'Queen Victoria'
B. INTER PARISH AND BAND CLUB RIVALRY				
QORMI	St. George	'St. George'	St. Sebastian	'Pinto'
RABAT, GOZO	The Assumption	'Leone'	St. George	'La Stella'
SLIEMA	Stella Maris	'Stella Maris'	Sacred Heart	'Sliema'
VALLETTA	St. Paul	'La Vallette'	St. Dominic[3] (Dominicans)	'King's Own'

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[1] Both saints are secondary; the titular is the Assumption of Our Lady.
[2] The devotion is centred on a church in the parish that is run by regular clergy. The rivalry is thus classified midway between A and B.
[3] Though this is the main feast, the titular of the parish is Our Lady of Porto Salvo.

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C. BAND CLUB RIVALRY ONLY

BIRKIRKARA	St. Helen	'St. Helen'	X	'Duke of Connaught'
HAMRUN	St. Gajetan	'St. Gajetan'	X	'St. Joseph'
MELLIEHA	Nativity of Our Lady	'La Vittoria'	X	'Imperial'
ŻABBAR[1]	O/L of Grace	'Maria M. Gratiae'	(St. Michael)	'St. Michael'
ŻEJTUN	St. Catherine	'Beland'	X	'Żejtun'

D. FESTA RIVALRY EXISTED FORMERLY

BALZAN	The Annunciation	'St. Gabriel'	St. Valentine	X
DINGLI	The Assumption	X	National Feast on September 8	'Dingli Club'[2]
GHARGHUR	St. Bartholomew	'St. Bartholomew'[2]	St. Joseph	X
LIJA	Transfiguration of Our Lord	'Pius X'	St. Aloysius	X
NAXXAR	Nativity of Our Lady	'Peace'	O/L of Doctrine	X
SAFI	The Conversion of St. Paul	'St. Paul'[2]	O/L of the Rosary	X
SIĠĠIEWI	St. Nicholas	'St. Nicholas'	St. Joseph	X

[1] The external feast of the secondary saint was suppressed.
[2] Social and festa club without a band.

178 241 234 512 milk production (notably the growth in the number of dairy cattle in the Islands) has produced a new kind of operator in Malta, the cows' milk producer, for whom field work is secondary and then based primarily on the production of fodder for his animals and fruit and vegetables for the family.

512 527 796 [241] [234] Sundays and Feast Days bring a break in the routine. Work in the fields lapses but animals still have to be milked and fed. On festa days the whole village goes en fête and to Church. A procession of religious images, members of religious orders, priests, penitents and others to the accompaniment of fireworks and brass bands blaring through the bustle in the narrow streets and alleys fills the evenings of these not infrequent days of festa, fast and feast. These Holy Days and holidays have been the traditional breaks in the round of hard and heavy working days. [178] [575] The present younger generation still enjoys the merriment and processing of these occasions but the Band Clubs have lost for them something of their position of fifty years ago, and the cinema and bright lights of Valletta provide alternatives and additions to the range of [461] possibilities. The young villager of today wants time off not only on festa days but on ordinary working days as well.

527 796 562 575 The village festa is a communal celebration. Both men and women can share in the religious and social aspects. The Band Clubs established in the most villages during the past hundred years have however been solidly masculine (B/521). Other recreations of the farming community are 517 largely masculine pastimes such as shooting small birds, gossipping in the village squares and bars or at the M.M.U. collection depôt, watching the races at the Marsa course or arguing prices at the Sunday morning market 'Fuq il-Monti' 517 in Valletta. In Gozo the big assembly early each Sunday 443 morning in 'It-Tokk', the main square of Victoria, is the scene of much buying, selling and talking by villagers from all parts of the Island who come each week to the capital [184] but rarely visit other villages. The focal pattern [494] resembles that in Malta, where the bus routes converge on the Urban area and Valletta but provide comparatively little inter-village transport (B/381).

178 241 Dissatisfaction with the way of life outlined above, whether for economic reasons (the small remuneration per man/hour of effort), or social considerations (the low status of the farmer, fisherman and other country people) is producing a younger generation anxious to escape if at all possible from following in the footsteps of their fathers and, thereby, accentuating the problem of how the farms of Malta and Gozo are to continue operating.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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FEAST DAYS.

Most of these are made the occasion of general rejoicings in Malta, celebrated either by illuminations, feastings, fireworks or some other open air amusement.

The greater number of the holidays in Malta are in connection with the religion of the people, and are held either in honour of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or of some Saint—as the titular Saint of the Parish or the celestial Patron of the town or village whose day is always celebrated with special pomp in each district.

Of all these *festas*, which are celebrated throughout the year with more or less enthusiasm, we only mention that which is celebrated on the 10th February in honour of St. Paul.

Great preparations are made for this day, to adequately celebrate this truly

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 national and religious festival, which has been lately declared a general holiday.

796 173 This very popular feast is intended to commemorate the greatest and most important event in the whole history of these Islands: that is, the conversion of the Maltese from Paganism to Christianity by the Great Apostle of the Gentiles, after he was shipwrecked on the shores of this Island A.D. 58.

796 The taste displayed by the Maltese in their festive decorations amount almost to genius, and they effect with the simplest means, what the most elaborate mechanism is generally required to effect elsewhere.

796 373 The front of the church, and the principal streets leading to it, are always decorated with thousands of white and coloured lamps. Along the road large

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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flags are seen floating, either from poles topped with evergreens, or from ropes stretched from house to house across the street. The balconies, windows and terraces of the private houses are also bedecked with many coloured flags and festooned with garlands of fairy lamps. 796 373

After dark the aspect of the streets of the town or village in which the feast is being celebrated is rendered still more striking by the multitude of variegated lamps. These are merely tiny cups of tinted glass with some oil and wick hung across and along the streets in a maze of graceful curves, but the profusion with which they are used and the taste shown in their arrangement combine to produce a magical result, the innumerable points of coloured light combining to form an illumination that is singularly brilliant and effective.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 [541] There is also on each occasion a liberal display of fireworks on the evening before the feast day, with the usual amount of noise and glare, and several bands, civic and military, play choice selections of music to the great delight of the large concourse of persons assembled.

[346] [353] [794] The interior of the churches is always most beautifully and gracefully decorated for the occasion of the festival, and the inhabitants of each town or village are always vying with each other in contributing large sums of money for the purpose of decorating the church of the parish to which they belong. In most cases the feast day closes with a procession followed by the image of the Blessed Virgin, or that of the Saint who is being honoured, carried on the shoulders of some eight or ten men.

7: Busuttil f, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Large crowds of people in their best 796 •
attire assemble, from nearly all parts of the Island, on the afternoon of the day of the festival, for the purpose of seeing the procession walking along the principal streets of the place.

When the statue is yet some distance of the parish church, the priests who take part in the procession enter the church, while a number of men and youths, carrying lighted torches, blue lights, and branches of real or artificial flowers in their hands, precede the statue up to the church entrance, amidst deafening shouts of "Evviva" the merry chiming of bells and the firing of hundreds of small bronze or iron petards, which are crammed to the muzzle with powder and stones to make the detonation more stunning.

Besides the procession which takes

7: Busuttil 1, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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place during the year in the towns and villages on the day of the festival, held in honour of the titular or some other Saint, there are also other processions, such as that of Good Friday and St. Gregory's day, the origin and description of which will be given in another place.

Having thus glanced briefly at some local recreations of the Maltese which have connection with their religious ceremonies in celebrating the annual festivals in honour of the celestial patron of the town or village, we now come to the other usages and customs, which are observed by the Maltese during the year commencing from that of

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Early on the morning of the 1st. of January, groups of children may be

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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the 1st of January playing popular pieces of music, and this they do as a New Year's greeting. These men will rarely leave a house until some little gift of money is bestowed upon them as a remuneration for their trouble in paying their annual congratulations.

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ST. ANTHONY'S DAY.

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Among the popular Maltese customs in which animals play a leading part, that of the blessing of the quadrupeds of the equine species, in Valletta, on St. Anthony's day, is the most familiar.

On the morning of the 17th January (St. Anthony's day) a number of horses, mules, and donkeys, decked out in ribbons and tassels, are driven in procession in front of the Vittoria, a little

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 church in Str. Mezzodì, at the back of
825 the Royal Opera House, where a priest standing at the door of the little church, sprinkles the animals with holy water as they pass by.

The same ceremony takes place annually at Notabile, where the animals are blessed by an Augustinian friar, at the door of St. Augustine Church. Here the quadrupeds partake of some barley which is placed in a tray for them.

796 In the time of the Order of St. John
825 of Jerusalem, the ceremony of blessing
195 the quadrupeds on St. Anthony's day was more imposing than it is in our days.

The first that took part in the procession, were the horses drawing the Grand Master's stately carriage, followed by every description of vehicle,

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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from the gala coach of the dignitaries of the Island to the peasant's cart. 796 825 175

Very many inquiries have been made into the origin of the blessing of quadrupeds on this festival, none of which, however, has proved satisfactory.

That St. Anthony has been long recognized as the patron and protector of the lower animals, and particularly of pigs, is a well established fact. 796 825

Fuller, in his "Worthies." says: "St. Anthony is universally known as the patron of hogs, having in all pictures a pig for his attendant, though for what reason is unknown, except because being a hermit, and having a cell or hole digged in the earth, and feeding principally on roots, he and the hogs were both alike in their diet and lodgings." 796 825 114

When St. Anthony was living in the 796 173 825

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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173 desert, away from the rumours of the
796 world, for the only object of serving God,
825 the devil tried all his means to tempt the old hermit and win him to himself—the Saint, however, always held fast and kept faithful to God. The fiend, seeing that all his efforts were vain, took to frightning and tormenting the good hermit. On several occasions he appeared to him amidst a flock of wild beasts. Anthony, however, was never frightened, he soon invoked the name of our Lord and signed the cross for help, and the devil enraged was always obliged to leave him unhurt.

796 This is probably the reason why ani-
825 mals are blessed on St' Anthony's day,
173 so as to keep off the devil from them, and thus man is less liable to be injured or hurt by them.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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CANDLEMAS DAY

This is a religious festival observed not only in Malta but in all other Catholic countries in honour of the Blessed Virgin on the 2nd of February, the 40th day after the Nativity of our Lord.

The word Candlemas is evidently derived from the benediction of the candles, followed by a procession, which takes place in the churches on the morning of this day.

Nearly every family in the Island is presented with one or two of these blessed candles—each having at the lower end, the image of the Blessed Virgin stamped in gold leaf, as a distinction from other ordinary wax candles.

These they receive either from the priests, or from some other person attached to the church, as a sort of a slight recompense, for the contributions

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796 offered during the year, for the purpose
794 either of decorating or repairing the
798 church or churches of the parish to
431 which they belong.
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It is also customary for every parish priest—on this special day, or on the day following—to present both the Bishop and the Governor of the Island with a
[643] two lb. candle. It is to be observed, however, that the candle given to the Governor is only a blessed one when he happens to profess the Roman Catholic Religion.

178 This giving of candles to both the
796 Bishop and the Governor—a continua-
354 tion of a custom that prevailed in the
793 time of the Order of St. John of Jeru-
431 salem, when the Grand Master was annually presented with a blessed candle on this day—is meant as a token of respect to each of the highest Ecclesiastical and Civil dignitaries of the Island.

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This festival is said to have originated with the ancient Romans who, on the night of the 1st day of February, went about the streets of Rome with lighted torches and candles in honour of the Goddess *Februa*, the mother of Mars. 796 173

In the year 684, however, pope Sergius, anxious to wean his disciples from the practice of heathen observances, and seeing that it would be useless to prohibit a practice of so long standing, turned the ceremony to a christian account by enjoining a similar offer of candles to the Blessed Virgin, and ordained that all Christian people should come to church on the 2nd day of February with candles in honour of the Virgin Mother of God. 796 175

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541 spent in feastings and revelling of every
174 kind.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

•796 783 In the afternoon of this day, which is known by the name of "Hadd innies" (the people's Sunday), immense crowds of people, from all parts of the Island, flock to casal Zabbar, in their best Sunday finery, for the purpose of saying some prayers before our Lady of Graces (tal Grazia) in the pari-h Church of the village, as an atonement of the follies committed on the Carnival days, After paying the visit the people go out of the church parading the streets.

796 265 The numerous shops of the said village are pretty well got up for this occasion. Stews, ham, cheesecakes, and other viands are profusely supplied for

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those, who, either from the effect of the country walk, or from the smells emanating from the cooked rabbits and fried sausages, feel inclined to go in and partake of the tempting dishes. 796 265

The crowd of visitors keep on promenading along the streets of the village till little before sunset. At the *Angelus*, the Zabbar visitors are on their way home, and the inhabitants of the village, are left peacefully alone to remove the chairs and tables prepared for their friends and relations. 796

HOLY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY 796 785

These two days of Holy Week—the end of the Penitential season—are days of solemn and melancholy ceremonial in Malta and observed as days of rigid

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[185]

fast, being sacred as a commemoration of the crucifixion of our Lord.

The Churches are covered with black hangings, all the altars stripped of their ornaments, and all the bells are kept silent in token of deep mourning.

The people assist in crowds at the most imposing services which take place in all the principal churches on these days.

On Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday), from about 1 p.m. till very late at night, the towns, Notabile and the other thickly populated centres of Malta, present a very striking scene.

Hundreds, from every rank and class of the people, generally in couples or in groups, are seen most devoutly performing the visit to the churches, reciting prayers all the time as they move from one church to another.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Good Friday is kept as a day of general mourning. All business is suspended, and no holdings of public proceedings take place upon this day. The churches are all crowded, especially in the adoration of the Cross which, no doubt, is the most striking ceremony of Good Friday. 796.

In the afternoon, after a three hours sermon, or meditation upon the seven words uttered by our Redeemer before his dying for us on the Cross, large crowds of people assemble on each side of the streets of Valletta, the three Cities, Notabile, and most of the villages to see the processions which are intended to commemorate the passion and death of our Saviour.

In these processions several life-sized images, representing the principal events of the Crucifixion, are carried through

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 the main streets, attended by scores of *fratelli*, or members of the fraternity of the Crucifix, who are entirely covered in white or dark brown garments, and by the clergy of the parish, chanting as they follow the statues carried before them at equal distances in the procession. At the end of each of these processions a gorgeous bed is carried, covered with a canopy hung with rich embroidered curtains on which a life-sized figure of our Redeemer is stretched.

After traversing several of the streets, the procession re-enters the church and every body goes quietly home.

HOLY SATURDAY
or
EASTER EVE

The service of Holy Saturday is signalized by the Benediction of the paschal

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Candle and the solemn chanting of the 796
"*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*" which is the signal for the uncovering of the Church pictures, which had been covered during the two preceding weeks, and the simultaneous ringing of all the Church bells which were kept hushed in token of mourning during the two preceding days.

General rejoicings now commence, and Easter greetings are profusely exchanged amongst all classes of the people.

Peculiar custom prevails in Valletta 796
and Vittoriosa on Easter Eve. Just 533
at sunset, two or three men, one with 184
a big drum and the others with fifes, playing a merry tune, go about the streets, followed by large crowds of men, among whom noisy bands of lads, who keep rushing and pushing wildly all

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 533 184 the time through the spectators, each adding his quota to the universal clamour. Everything, however, is done in perfect good humour and no one dreams either of giving or taking offence. (*)

EASTER

796 Very early on Easter Sunday, before daylight, there is, in each town and in some of the villages of Malta, a procession with the image representing the Resurrection of our Lord.

The most popular of these processions is undoubtedly that of Valletta.

Large crowds of people assemble, as

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[97] (*) The Greeks celebrate the feast of Easter with singing and shouting in honour of the Resurrection --with crakling of a large bonfire on Easter evening and on Easter morning before daybreak.
(Brand's "Popular Antiquities").

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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early as 2 o'clock in the morning, round the door of the Catholic Greek Church, in Strada Vescovo, whence the procession starts.

At about 3 a.m. the procession—which consists of a number of young men carrying lighted lamps in their hands, led by the "*Papas*" and followed by the image—proceeds through some of the principal streets of Valletta, amidst the joyful acclamations of thousands of people who flock there from almost all parts of the Island.

When the procession arrives at the small church of Vittoria (at the back of the Royal Opera House) the bearers of the image halt for a while; all at once the way is cleared and a general run is taken with the image as far as the walls of the city.

This run is repeated three or four

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 times at different parts of the town; the best run, however, which is mostly enjoyed, both by the spectators and the carriers of the statue, is that which takes place at the lower end of Strada Reale on the hill opposite St. Catherine's Church and Convent.

Here large crowds of men are seen ready to help the bearers in the run with the heavy statue up the hill.

After traversing several other streets, the image is deposited in the same church from which it started.

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EASTER EGGS &c.

The custom of eating and presenting *fijolli* and round cheese cakes *(kassatat)* is as prevalent in Malta, at Easter, as it is in any other town or country of Italy.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Maltese children look forward with great anxiety to get either from their parents, or from some friend or relative, a *figolla* at Easter. 796 262 431

The *figolla* consists of a bit of flat baked dough, cut in the shape of a woman, a turk, an eagle, a horse, a star, or a basket, with one or more eggs, having the shell stained red, or some other colour, embedded in its centre and fixed in position by cross bands of paste.

This characteristic rite of Paschal or Easter eggs is most widely diffused. 796 262

The universal connection of eggs with Eastertide does not seem to rest on any Christian symbolism. This popular observance is clearly of pagan origin. 171 174

In pagan imagery the egg was assigned to *Astarte*—the Phœnician Venus—as an emblem of the fructifying

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 forces of nature, and may thus have
262 come to be associated with April, the
171 month held sacred to *Aphroditis* (*), in
174 or near which Easter falls.

We are told that the Jews used eggs in the feast of the Passover, and that when the Persians keep the festival of the Solar New Year (in March) they mutually present each other with coloured eggs. There can be little doubt, however, that the use of eggs at this season was originally symbolical of the revivification of nature, that is, the springing forth of life in spring.

A writer, in the "Gentlemen's Magazine" for July 1783, supposes the Easter egg to be an emblem of the Resurrection of our Lord—in the same manner, as the chicken entombed, as

(*) The Grecian name of Venus

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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it were, in the egg, in due time bursts its shell and springs forth to life. 796 262 174 171

Hutchinson (History of Northumberland) says: Eggs were held by the Egyptians as a sacred emblem of the renovation of mankind after the deluge.

The Jews adopted it to suit the circumstances of their History as a type of their departure from the land of Egypt, and it was used in the feast of Passover as a part of the furniture of the table with the Paschal Lamb.

The Christians have certainly used it on this day, containing as it does the elements of future life, as an emblem of the Resurrection. It seems that these eggs were decorated for a religious trophy after the days of lent, which are days of mortification and abstinence.

We know also that the Jews in ce-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 lebrating their Passover, placed on the
262 table two unleavened cakes called "pass-
171 over cakes" (*) with hard boiled eggs
174 bound in with slips of paste cross ways on them (†)

Hyde, in his "Oriental Sports" says that the Christians buy eggs at Easter and stain them with a red colour, in memory of the blood of Christ shed for us at the time of the Crucifixion.

That the Roman Catholic Church has considered eggs as emblematical of the Resurrection may be gathered from the Ritual.

St. GREGORY'S DAY
General procession

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793 This very popular feast, which takes place on the first Wednesday after

(*) The *figolla*.
(†) Brand's "Popular Antiquities."

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Easter, is celebrated by a general procession composed of the fraternities and Clergy of all the parishes of the Island, led by the Chapter of the Cathedral followed by His Grace the Bishop of the Diocese. [796] [793]

The solemn chiming of the bells of all the parishes in the Island at sunset, on the day before, and the lighting of a large fire on the top of Cathedral church at Notabile, about 10 at night, warns the faithful to gather early on the following morning (Wednesday) in their respective parish church to start for the annual procession. [262]

At about 7 o'clock in the morning, Casal Paula is literally thronged with thousands of people from all parts of the Island, awaiting instructions as to the marching and ordering of the grand procession.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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•796 A person, then, appointed by the Bishop, reads out the parishes to march in the order of their seniority. This done, the cross-bearers of all the parishes walk, following each other, to the Parish Church at Tarxien—some 10 minutes walk from Casal Paula—where they join their respective fraternities and clergy, and start for Zeitun — about a mile and a half from Tarxien—each Company walking behind their standard bearer, joining in the response of the Litany of the Saints which is pronounced by one of the priests of each parish.

On arriving at Zeitun, after passing through the parish Church of St. Catherine, were the standard bearers in the procession, by way of salute, wave their standards three or four times before the high altar, the procession proceeds

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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to the old church of St. Gregory which 796 •
is at the end of the village.

The waving of the standards is renewed here with more excitement; in fact, large crowds assemble round the environs of this small church to witness the daring feats of some of the brawny countrymen standard-bearers, who, although encircled by half a dozen or more policemen, who try to prevent them from waving the standard, (*) succeed in doing so to the great delight of the enthusiastical crowd.

When the clergy of each parish enters this church, they kneel down before the altar of St. Gregory and exclaim aloud for three times "Misericordia." One of

(*) The reason the police interfere is, that on several occasions accidents have happened through the breaking of the flag-staffs

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 the Canons of the Cathedral then says mass and the ceremony is over.

At the conclusion of this procession there is a scene of general confusion throughout the whole village of Zeitun. Priests, friars, *fratelli*, cross and standard-bearers, men and women of all classes, especially country people, and of these unfailingly the most recently married couples—all in their best attire and with a grand display of jewels and gold (*)—are seen going to and fro, buying and eating sweetmeats
[493] and cheese cakes. Then again hundreds of all sorts of vehicles, from His

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[675] [584] (*) Till lately, young women residing in the country insisted before they were married on its being particularly stipulated in the marriage contract, that their husbands should take them to Casal Zeitun on St. Gregory's day, to Valletta on St. John's day, and to Boschetto on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, on the 29th of June.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Grace's carriage to the commonest donkey cart, keep moving through the merry crowds, in search of their occupants. 796 [493]

Most of the people, however, who take part in this general procession, either stop at Zeitun, or proceed to Marsascirocco — a watering place at some distance from that village—where they spend the remainder of the day in merry making.

Round cheese cakes, *kassatât*, is the most common edible connected with this day, and from early morning, the whole day long, the shrill cries uttered by the innumerable vendors of the cakes may be heard throughout the village. 796 262 265

A few remarks about the origin of this procession will be interesting. 796 174

Many and various are the opinions as regards that origin.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 174 [731] Abela, in his "History of Malta" says: that it was instituted as a vow to St. Gregory, to whose intercession the Maltese had recourse in 1519, when the Island was visited by an epidemic disease.

Ciantar, the celebrated Historian, assures us, however, that the procession was instituted in 1400 long before the epidemic mentioned by Abela.

[648] Others again say: that it was held about the year 1429 whilst the Island was being besieged by some 18000 Moors, but this could not possibly be the case in as much as the people who were besieged within the walls of the town could not join in the cry "Misericordia" at Zeitun.

[731] Again some say that the procession took place for the first time in Malta in thanksgiving to the Almighty after

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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the deliverance from a large swarm of locusts that once caused a dreadful havoc in the Island. 796 174 [731]

Monsignor Duzina, the Apostolic Visitor, who visited Malta in February 1575, having found that the origin of this procession was involved in great obscurity, caused the most aged men of the Island to be brought before him, and on asking them about the origin of the institution of this general procession, he was informed that the tradition was "That the procession was founded by a general vow of the Maltese after their deliverance from the Turks, whose fleet was dispersed by a terrible storm at Marsascirocco,(*) just when the Moslems were on the point 796 174 782 648

(*) This is probably the reason that the general procession goes to the churches of St. Catherine and St. Gregory, those being the nearest churches to Marsascirocco.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 174 [648] [782]

of effecting a landing on the shores of the Island.

It is an undeniable fact that the procession has been instituted in commemoration of some signal public deliverance. Of all the traditions, however, the most generally received is that which we read in the acts of the said Mons. Duzina's visit in 1575.

796 This procession used formerly to take place in lent, on St. Gregory's day, which falls on the 12th of March. That day was selected not because the above mentioned invasion occurred on that particular day, but because lent being the time of penance, our faithful forefathers thought that the vow would be more acceptable to God in lent. And the day of St. Gregory was chosen, that Saint being the founder of all processions which are solemnized by the Roman Catholic Church.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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527 are seen putting off the shore and
501 steering their course homewards.

527 The custom of making swings on
526 Ascension Day, is very common in Malta, especially among the country people. In almost every village, lots of women and children may be seen swinging together and singing merrily on the day of *Lapsi*.

527 No reason could perhaps be assigned
173 by the Maltese for the practice of celebrating *Lapsi* by parties and picnics on the water, and for making swings, except that they follow the custom of their ancestors.

• 796 ***St. JOHN'S EVE***
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859 Not unlike other nations, the Maltese are not indifferent in celebrating

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the Nativity of St. John by kindling great fires in the public streets, and giving their children dolls to carry in their arms on this day, in order to make good the prophecy respecting the Baptist "*Multi in nativitatae ejus gaudebunt*". 796 372 857

Days and even weeks before this festival, groups of children are seen going out into the country fields to gather straw, twigs and all sorts of other combustibles which they store up for St. John's eve.

On the night of the 23rd. of June, the day before the festival of the Saint, great fires are kindled in the streets, squares, and market places of the towns and villages of the Island, and as fire after fire blazes out of the darkness of that summer night, the effect is singularly striking. 796 372

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 These fires are sometimes kept up
372 for hours, being continually fed by the scores of by-standers who take great delight in throwing amidst the flames some old rickety piece of furniture which they consider as lumber in their houses. Lots of happy and reckless children, and very often men, are seen merrily leaping in succession over and through the crackling flames (*).

796 At the time of the Order of St.
372 John of Jerusalem, the Grand Master
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[174] (*) Leaping over the fires is mentioned among the superstitious rites used at the *Palilia* feasts, instituted in honour of *Pales* the goddess of shepherds, (in the calends of May) in Ovidius's Fasti.

" Moxque per ardentes stipulae crepitantis acervos
Traijcias celeri strenua membra pede "

The learned Moresin appears to have been of opinion that the custom of leaping over these fires is a vestige of the ordeal, where to be able to pass through fires with safety, was held to be an indication of innocence.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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himself, soon after the *Angelus* used to leave his palace, accompanied by the Grand Prior, the Bishop, and two bailiffs, to set fire to some pitch barrels which were placed for the occasion in the square facing the sacred Hospital. 796 372 175

Great crowds used to assemble here in order to assist at this ceremony. The setting ablaze of the five casks, and later on, of the 8 casks, (*), by the Grand Master, was a signal for the others to kindle their fires in the different parts of the town.

Various opinions are entertained by antiquarian writers with regard to the origin of these fires on St. John's eve. 796 372 171 174

From the account given by Jakob Grimm in his "Deutsche Mythologie" p. p. 583, 593, it would appear that

(*) Eight being the languages of the Order.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 the great blaze reserved for the eve
372 of the feast of the nativity of St.
171 John the Baptist on the 23rd. of
174 June, is observed with similar rites in every country of Europe.

The kindling of the fire, the leaping over or through the flames clearly show that these rites are essentially of heathen origin. They are obviously connected with the worship of the sun, and were doubtless practised long before the Baptist was born. In old heathen times the summer and winter solstices were the two greatest and most widespread festivals in Europe.

These fires—says another writer—are evidently a remnant of the ancient Beal fires of the Druids, at the *Beil* time, which was at the beginning of May. But why do they chiefly occur on the night before the festival of the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Saint, instead of the old period of *Beil* time which was the beginning of May? —I do not believe that a satisfactory explanation of these circumstances has yet been given by any of the antiquaries. It was perhaps to transfer the practice or custom of lighting these fires from a Pagan to a Christian object.

The Nativity of St. John the Baptist was a great and solemn festival of the Church, like those of the other great festivals of Martyrs, the eve or vigil of it was, in the early ages, commemorated with appropriated ceremonies. The public devotions were kept up all night in the churches, of which the Saint was the patron, and the solemnities of the next day were ushered in amongst types and figures appropriate to the occasion. Amongst these was probably introduced a large and

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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[796]

unusual exhibition of lights to typify the Baptist who, in the Gospel, is called by the Saviour himself "A burning shining Light." What could have been more natural than that the early Christian Authorities would have directed the people to light their anniversary fires on the eve of this Saint, and thus give to the national custom a Christian instead of a Pagan significance? To this feeling, most likely is due the transfer of the fires to the 23rd. of June and, perhaps too, this perpetuation to this day amongst the people.

Gebelin, in his "Allegories Orientales" accounts in the following manner for the custom of making fires on Midsummer Eve.

"Can one" says he "omit to mention here the St. John's fires, those sacred fires kindled about midnight, on the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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very moment of the solstices, by the greatest part of ancient as well as of modern nations—a religious ceremony of the most remote antiquity which was observed for the prosperity of states and people and to dispel every kind of evil? The origin of this fire which is still retained by so many nations, though enveloped in the mist of antiquity, is very simple. It was a *Feu de joie*, kindled the very moment the year began; for the first of all years, and the most ancient that we know of, began at this month of June, hence the very name of this month, *Junior* meaning the youngest, which is renewed; while that of the preceding one is May, *Major*, meaning the ancient. Thus the one was the month of young people whilst the other belonged to old men.

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These *feu de joie* were accompanied, at the same time, with vows and sacrifices for the prosperity of the people and the fruits of the earth.

They danced also round this fire, and the most active leaped over it. Each on departing took a fire brand, and the remains were scattered to the wind, which at the same time that it dispersed the ashes, was thought to expel every evil. When after a long train of years, the year ceased to commence at this solstice, the custom of making these fires, at this time, was still continued by force of habit. Besides it would have been a sad thing to have deprived the people of a day of joy in times when there were not many of them, thus the custom has been continued and handed down to us."

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Dr. Milner is of opinion that the fires lighted up all over the continent, on the eve of the 24th. of June, are not intended as the idolatrous worship of the sun or *Baal*, the Philistine God of fire, but in honour of Christ's precursor, as alluding to his character of bearing witness to the light (John i. 7) and of his being himself a bright and shining light (John V, 35). 796 372 174 114

In conclusion, it would appear as certain, that the fires of St. John's eve were intended to typify the Saint by an exhibition of light. 796 372

Formerly the feast of St. John (24th. of June) was very popular in Malta. It ranked with that of SS. Peter and Paul, celebrated at Notabile on the 29th of the same month. 796

The number of people that flocked to Valletta from all parts of the Island,

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 on the morning of this day, was indeed very great.

When the procession was over, most of the country people repaired to the upper Barracca, which was then roofed over and consequently offered a very comfortable temporary asylum. Here they amused themselves till the evening eating, drinking, and singing.

St. PETER AND St. PAUL

796 529 One of the principal occasions of amusement for the Maltese is, no doubt, the popular feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, celebrated at Notabile or Città Vecchia on the 29th of June.

[192] This feast is known by the name of l'IMNARIA which is a corruption of *luminaria* (illumination) from the illumination which takes place at the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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Cathedral Church of Notabile on the eve of the said festival.

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On the morning of the feast—as soon as the procession, which is led by the Bishop, enters the Cathedral Church—large crowds, especially of country people in their substantial holiday finery, and wearing their hoarded ornaments of massive gold, drive at a racing speed to Boschetto, where, careless of the excessive heat of a broiling sun, they divide into companies and under the shades of the leafy orange trees in the beautiful garden, they seem quite happy in eating their sumptuous dinners, consisting chiefly of stewed rabbit, ham, pies, cheese and an allowance of common wine, which they keep in large dark glass bottles, or in tin cans where the indispensable liquid is less liable to being spilt.

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543 perhaps excites more interest to the visitors than the beautiful animals which are considered a great ornament to the show.

Sta. VENERA

796 A similar occasion as that of *Imnaria* is afforded to the never tired merry-makers country-women, on the 4th Sunday of July, the day dedicated to the festival of St. Anne.

As early as 4 o'clock in the morning of this day, scores of carts, loaded with gaily dressed country girls, leave their respective villages and proceed to Sta. Venera, a small church at Hamrun, which is very nicely decorated for the occasion.

[537] Here a sermon on the life of the great saint is preached to the people as-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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sembled, from a wooden pulpit in the open air, near the small chapel. When the sermon is over the jolly country girls take a great delight in the fair which is held along the space in front of the small church, which is blocked up from end to end with temporary booths.

The wares offered for sale are of the simplest description, consisting principally of scapulars, pictures, gay woollen and cotton sashes and handkerchiefs, cheep trinkets, and glass and china of inferior quality; but there is enough colour and glitter to produce a pretty kaleidoscopic effect when touched by the rays of the bright shining sun.

On this morning the scores of vendors of sweetmeats, lemonade, and iced water seem endowed with extra power of throat and lungs for vociferating these refreshing compounds, and the set up

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 tables, piled with the castellated erec-
543 tions of honey and almonds, tempt
438 those crowds of country people to spend
265 what they have purposely put by for this annual holiday.

After three or four hours of high revel the wheeled vehicles return home with their jolly occupants singing all along the road.

Sta. MARIA

796 On the 15th of August, the day de-
184 dicated to the Assumption of the B. V. Mary (Santa Maria), nearly all the Island of Malta is *en fête*.

[103] Seven of the twentyfour villages, that is:— Casals Musta, Dingli, Attard, Crendi, Micabiba, Asciak and Gudia celebrate on this day their titular feast with the usual illuminations, fireworks and processions.

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This feast is also celebrated with great pomp at the Cathedral Church of città Vittoria, Gozo, and for this reason our sister Island is, on the occasion, an attraction for the Maltese people. In fact, several steamers and launches decorated with coloured flags, are employed on the eve of the festival, and sometimes for some days before, transporting the vast concourse of people who, influenced either by a spirit of devotion or a desire to enjoy a pleasant trip, a healthy change, and a little fresh air, embrace the opportunity of paying a visit to the famed Island of Calypso to behold the festivities which take place there at the festival of "Santa Maria."

On the evening of the 14th the illuminations and fireworks are very splendid; the religious ceremonies, on that,

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 and the following day, are conducted with the usual solemnity and fervour. 541 There are also several races of quadrupeds in the afternoon of the day of the festival, similar to those which are held in Malta on the feast of S. S. Peter and Paul (L'Imnaria). These races bring the amusements to a close.

796 484 788 Worth mentioning is the custom which prevails amongst some of our country people on the 14th of August, the eve of the feast of "Santa Maria."

Groups of country men and country women, actuated purely by religious motives and a desire to honour the Great Mother of God, start for a pilgrimage of more than 8 hours walk on the morning of that summer day, heedless of the excessive heat of the scorching sun, to visit the churches at the 7 above mentioned villages dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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St. ROCCO RACES

The famous horse race which is annually run at Pietà on the 16th of August, the feast day of St. Roque, is a source of great excitement to the large crowds of people who flock thither from all parts of the Island. 527 541 [796]

Although the races do not commence before 6 p.m. yet, as early as 3 o'clock, the Pietà creek is all covered with hundreds of boats of every description, laden with people; and all along the Pietà quay, from the Bathing house — the place from which the competing animals start—to the winning post, at a little distance from "Portes des Bombes" — is always lined with thousands of spectators in order to witness the sport.

Some 5 minutes before 6 o'clock, a [202] gun is fired as a signal for the people to clear the way; a second report is

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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527 These races were first held on St.
541 Roque's Feast day in consequence of
776 the working of miraculous cures of
755 the plague by St. Roque who was
796 specially invoked by persons afflicted,
195 while stricken himself with the desease, at Piacenza, in Italy.

THE "VITTORIA"

527 ***Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary***

[796] The 8th. of September, the day dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is no doubt the grandest and the most popular day for the people of these Islands.

Both the streets and church of Senglea—the town in which the feast is celebrated—present on this occasion a most lively appearance.

[184] The grand illumination and the

?: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

527
526 by Government in commemoration of the defeat of the Turks (*)

The famous annual boat race of the 8th. of September draws as great a concourse of people, comparatively speaking, as the far-famed Oxford and Cambridge contest annually does along the banks of the Thames.

The Valletta harbour quays, from the new extension, right up to the old Barriera, and all the overlooking lines of walls and batteries, on both sides of the harbour, are early taken possession of by thousands of spectators who take great delight in this exciting annual regatta.

The course is from "Ras Hanzir"

(*) Both the regatta and the *giostra* were formerly held on the 10th of August, St. Lawrence day—The Parochial feast of Vittoriosa, the principal seat during the memorable siege of 1565.

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7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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in their bathing costume, immediately begin the task of endeavouring to seize the flag, one after another they continue tumbling into the water and raising again to renew the attempt.

Gradually the greasy matter diminishes and the competitors are able to advance further. At last the winner with the prize flag in hand, amidst great shouts of "bravo," loud whistling, and clapping of hands announces the end of the National Feast for that day.

The 7th of September is also commemorated by a melancholy, and at the same time imposing, ceremony at the Co-Cathedral Church of St. John in Valletta.

On the morning of this day the celebrant, preceded by the Chapter and Clergy, descend into the crypt beneath the High Altar, and while chanting

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796 769 *requiems* for the repose of the souls of the knights interred there, and all the other dead who fell in the great siege, sprinkles holy water upon the tombs, while the great bells, in the towers above, peal mournfully the legend which the Maltese voice in the words "Il-libera tal Cavalieri" (the funeral of the Knights).

527 For some years past a purely civil commemoration of the glorious Victory of the 8th of Sept. (1565) when the Cross triumphed over the Crescent, has been celebrated, however, not on the 8th of September, but on the 1st Sunday after that date in Valletta, and the Sunday after that at Vittoriosa and Cospicua, while on the following Sunday the celebration takes place at Sliema and Zabbar.

In Valletta, the St. George's Square and Str. Reale, are worth seeing on this occasion.

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ulous effigy of the B. V. Mary, venerated in that shrine excavated out of the rock.

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ALL SOULS' DAY
2nd November

In Malta, the same as in any other Roman Catholic country, a feast is also celebrated for the dead, and the Cemeteries especially that of the "Addolorata," which ranks amongst the finest in Europe, are, on the 1st and 2nd of November the favourite resort of nearly the whole population of the towns and of the neighbouring villages.

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Amidst mournful tingling and tolling of the church bells, countless inhabitants, mostly clad in the habiliments of grief, and murmuring prayers, are seen wending their way to the Cemetery. Arrived

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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769 there they proceed to the tombs of
796 their departed dear ones.

[782] Here a widow and orphans are seen knelt in prayer at the vault of their respective husband and father,or perhaps some daughters at the resting place of their ever lost mother or father. There some father and mother contemplating the last abode of their beloved son in whom they had placed their future hopes; they are all there reverently and devoutly reciting prayers to the Almighty for the repose of the souls of their deceased.

The graves on these two days are very beautifully decorated. Some are literally covered by masses of flowers, some hung with wreaths and crosses woven of the loveliest blossoms, others converted into a temporary garden, with willows, cypress, and other shrubs.

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At the *Angelus*, these devout mourners, after hours spent in prayers and in going round the cypress groves, reading the beautiful epitaphs inscribed on the rich marble tombstones and the beautiful monuments, take a last glance at the tombs, as if bidding a fond and affectionate farewell to their inanimate occupants, and then return to their city or country homes, either murmuring their prayers for the repose of the souls of the faithful departed, or talking about the many magnificent mausoleums, and the beauty of floral decorations lavished on them. The nearer the crowds approach their dwelling places the more they are reminded of the sacred day, by the mournful pealing of the bells which seem to say "Remember those you have lost, for to-day is the day of the dead."

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It is also the custom in Malta to commemorate all Souls' day by distributing relief among the poor and needy. Collections are made for the purpose of purchasing bread and providing dinner for the poor in the lower quarters of the towns and populous centres.

A walk at about 11 a.m., on the 2nd of November, as far as the square in front of the Capuchins' Convent at Vittoriosa or at Floriana, or to some other place where the relief is distributed, affords not a little delight.

About a hundred poor old men and women, some of whom either half crippled or blind are to be seen struggling towards the big boiler in which the dinner is being cooked, with something in the shape of a pot in their hands, each and every one eager to get his or her share of the nicely cooked dinner.

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[735] When these poor creatures get their share, they go gladly back to some corner to eat what has been procured for them by the contributions received from the charitably disposed.

Before leaving the description of the celebration of All Souls' Day, it would be interesting also to mention another custom which prevails in the Island on the 2nd of November.

On this day most of the charnel-houses are thrown open and lighted up with scores of oil lamps and decked out with flowers, while crowds throng the vaults to visit the bones of their friends and relatives.

[792] The most crowded of these vaults, however, used to be that below the Capuchin church and Convent at Flo-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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riana. (*). Here the fleshless skeletons of the monks who died in the convent are dressed up in the robes which they wore during life, and arranged erect in niches along the wall. 796 769 [792]

St. Odilo, abbot of Cluny, in 998 instituted the "Commemoration of all the faithful departed" in all the monasteries of his Congregation, on the 1st of November, which was soon adopted by the whole western Church. The Council of Oxford in 1222, declared it a holiday of the second class, on which certain necessary and important kinds of work were allowed (†). In Malta however the 2nd of November is only a day of devotion. 175 796 769

(*) The opening of this vault for the public on All Soul's day has been stopped for some years past to prevent some accidents through overcrowding. Visitors, however, are allowed in at any time of the year by applying for permission to the Father Superior.

(†) BUTLER, "Life of Saints."

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CHRISTMAS

The Maltese are not at all wanting 796•
in the religious fervour and the exhibition of hearty demonstrations of delight with which Christians welcome the anniversaries of the Nativity of our Blessed Redeemer.

This is made very apparent by the rich decorations and the illuminations which are to be seen in the churches on Christmas night.

Places of public resort and private residences are also richly decorated with floral emblems and devices on this occasion.

On the 24th December—Xmas eve— 796
most of the inhabitants, especially 574
young men, do not retire to bed at all 262
but ramble about, some parading the streets playing sweet melodies to charm the ears of the people, and others going

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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796 574 262 in companies to some one of their friends, at whose house they amuse themselves eating honey cakes and pancakes or fritters, and playing for nuts till the church bells ring a little before or after midnight.

At the conclusion of the service they come out again and devote the remainder of the night to amusements.

796 534 [184] The approaching festival of Christmas is heralded in some of the villages of Malta by the appearance of the "zakk" and "tambur" players in the streets. (*)

[237] The *zakk* or bagpipe is a wind instrument—one of the primitive instruments of sylvan music—formed of an inflated dog skin, which is held by the player under his left arm, with the legs

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[541] (*) The *Zakk* and tambourine are also in use amongst our lower classes on the days of Carnival.

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directed upwards, and having a mouth piece by which the skin is filled, and a cane flute or pipe which is played with both hands. This the country people play at this time of the year to represent the shepherds of Bethlehem. 796 534 [237]

The decking out of the *presepiu*, a crib or representation of the Nativity of the Holy Child at Bethlehem, by a group of dolls with pasteboard scenery, furnishes amusement to the Maltese, both old and young. 796 778

Several of the houses have a crib more or less artistically arranged, and the better the arrangements of the crib, the greater is the concourse of people who come to see it.

The custom of decking our churches and habitations with evergreens at Christmas has existed from the very establishment of Christianity and was 796 174 824

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796 174 824 unquestionably derived from the like practice of our Pagan ancestors.

"Trimming of Temples," says Polydore Virgil "with hangings, flowers, boughs, and garlands was taken from the heathen people, who decked their idols and houses with such array.

796 174 373 "Christmas," says Blount, "was called the feast of lights in the Western or Latin Church, from the many lights or candles that were lit at the feast, and this because Christ, the light of all lights, that true light, then came into the world. Hence the prevalent custom to have so many lights in our churches at Christmas midnight service.

796 194 262 The custom of eating pancakes or fritters and honey cakes at Christmas in Malta is supposed to owe its origin to the cakes baked in honour of *Janus*, who presided over the beginning of the New Year.

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carries a certain spice of gambling, the players of *Morra* congregate at some street corner or a public house and indulge in a game for small stakes which the winner generally spent in assuaging the thirst of both parties, a proceeding to which the loser as a rule made no objection. 524 525

FAIRS

Every Sunday morning there is a fair held along strada Mercanti, Valletta. The goods exposed for sale in these weekly fairs are of all descriptions, and attract large crowds, especially of country people. 443 438 527

Besides these Sunday fairs there is also another fair held annually at Floriana on the mornings of the feast days of St. Calcedonio, St. Giacomo, and 443 527 796

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443 St. Anna, which are celebrated on the
527 24th, 25th, and 26th of July. These
[196] fairs, however, which were once very
[178] popular, have now sunk into insignificance and most likely will before long entirely disappear.

443 Fairs have long been regularly held
171 in most parts of Europe and Asia, and they appear to have originated in the Church festivals, which were found to afford convenient opportunities for commercial transactions. The concourse of people being then so much greater than on other occasions.

USAGES

195 The ancient Maltese formerly kept
562 their wives in the strictest retirement. They held the opinion that women should never appear but twice in public,

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these transformed creatures return home towards dawn quite exhausted and awake in the morning quite unconscious of their nocturnal expedition."[1] The derivation of the word *Gaugau* has been given as the Syrian *Hagogo*, a ghost; but surely the *Gaugau* is more than a simple ghost. His behaviour stamps him as a vampire. Busuttil says that "the yearly punishment" is thought to be inflicted because Christ "does not like anyone to be born at the same time he was born," and then suggests that the *Gaugau* came into Malta with the Phoenicians. The Phoenician origin and the popular explanation seem quite irreconcilable until it is recalled that—

> "It is well known that in the transition from paganry to Christianity the Christian clergy, finding it impossible to wean the populace from old customs or to eradicate primitive beliefs, discreetly met the situation by diverting pagan festivals to the honour of Christ. It is not so generally known that December 25th, the Christmas Day of Christendom, was necessarily thus fixed for the reason that this date was the birthday of Mithra, and that the obdurate heathen flatly refused to relinquish their cherished festival. It was not until A.D. 400 that the Church Fathers accepted the inevitable, and tactfully adopted the Birthday of Mithra as the official Birthday of Christianity. At the beginning of the fifth century, S. Chrysostom, referring to the festival of the pagan Sun god, wrote: 'On this day also the birthday of Christ *was lately fixed* at Rome in order that, while the heathens were busy with their profane ceremonies, the Christians might perform their sacred rites undisturbed. They call this (December 25th) the birthday of the Invincible One (Mithra); but who is so invincible as the Lord? They call

[1] BUSUTTIL, *Holiday Customs in Malta*.

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it the Birthday of the Solar Disc; but Christ is the Sun of Righteousness' " (S. HEATH, *Romance of Symbolism*).[1]

We cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, connect the vampire *Gaugau* with Christianity; but with Mithra the affair becomes quite different. It is not difficult to connect a child born on the eve of the Birth-feast of the bloodthirsty Mithra with something more terrible than "ghostly pranks." It is comforting to hear that the vampire *Gaugau* is now capable of nothing worse than "frightening people with his groanings!"

There was a time before the dread broom of "Progress" began to sweep all peasant customs—good as well as bad—before it, when the newly-delivered mother kept carefully to her house during forty days for fear of meeting another mother who had been confined on the same day. It was believed that of two such women meeting within forty days of their confinement, one would suffer a great misfortune. Two possible reasons for this quaint prohibition are apparent. It was either some remnant of a primitive, levitical period of purification or a means of ensuring that the mother wasted no time gossiping at the doorway or in the market place, to the neglect of her young family.

GROWING UP

With the child's first birthday comes the *'uccija*, or "choosing." A tray or basket is filled with an assortment of articles representing trades and professions—a book, a rosary, a candle, an inkstand, a sword—whichever the baby first picks up will indicate its bent in life. This simple means of divination is widespread, and little need be said of it except that some grains of corn are sometimes introduced as a symbol of generosity, suggesting that at one time the *'uccija* decided

[1] H. BAYLEY, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*.

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to justify the inconvenience of caring for them is a lesson which had to be learned. "Ghalec ma tridx tmut l'ghagiusa, ghax actar ma ticber izjed titghallem"—"The old woman does not want to die for the older she grows the more she learns"—is a common saying. For further proof that the story of the "Kaukam" has come down from very early times, there is the only other context in which the word *ghagiusa* means "an old woman" or, more accurately, "the oldest woman hereabouts" (normally the word means "a crab").

> "We have an old custom in Malta," says Bussutil,[1] "to make children believe that the ghagiusa is killed at noon on Thursday, the middle of Lent. Mothers, after fasting the first twenty days of Lent, send their children to the door of the parish church, or of some convent to see the sexton or some friar throwing the old woman from the steeple. . . ."

That the destruction of the old woman should occur in the middle of Lent—a period of fasting—is too much of a coincidence not to indicate that, in times when food was scarce, the aged folk were removed—either by being thrown from a high place or, to save the guilt of actual murder, walled up in a rock tomb, as in the case of the peasant. The association of the Church with the destruction of the *ghagiusa* suggests that in primitive times the removal of the aged was the responsibility of the pagan priests who performed the "ritual murders." These murders may have developed from a practical necessity into a sacrificial propitiation.

The story of the Kaukam takes its name from the ancient's first piece of advice to his perplexed son. Faced with the probability of losing his own crops while he cares for those of the Sultan, who has commanded that no man may plant his

[1] GALEA AND MURRAY, op. cit.

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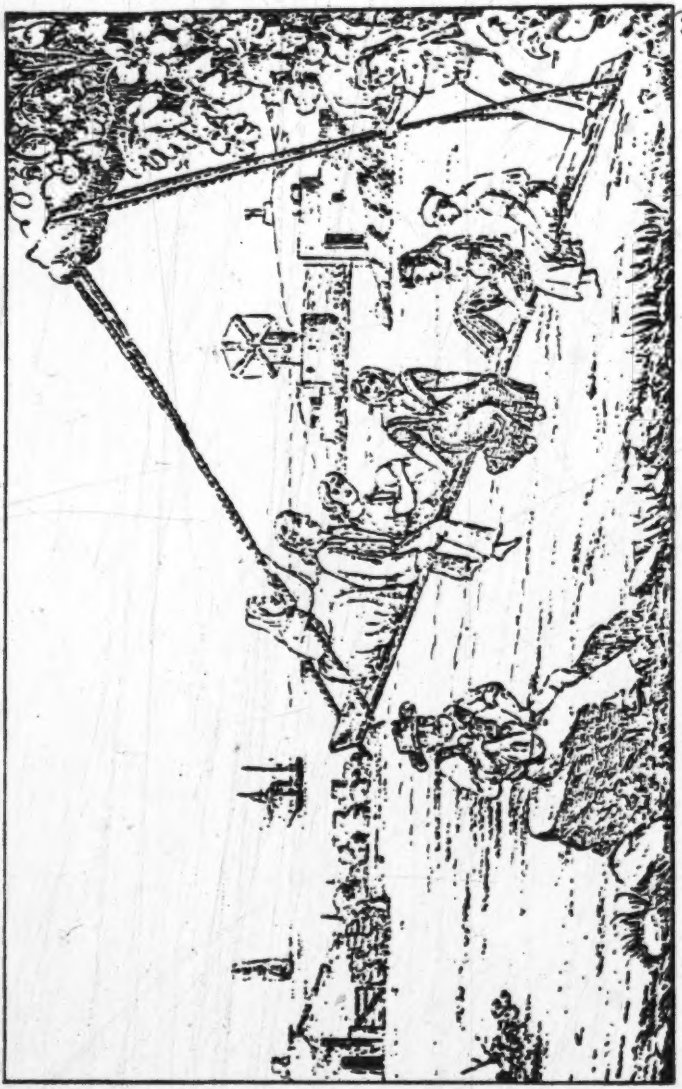

PEASANTS CELEBRATING "LAPSI"—FESTA OF THE ASCENSION
(From an old Maltese print)

[facing P. 128]

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will only be necessary for a "wise woman" or witch to spit on the hair while uttering a curse to bring misfortune upon the head which nourished it.

Grez will be careful not to laugh too heartily on a Friday—when the memory of the Crucifixion should make all sad. She will make the Sign of the Cross on leaving her house, on entering any vehicle or boat for no matter how short a journey, on cutting a piece of new cloth, before her baby's mouth when it yawns—so that evil spirits may not enter. On meeting a deformed or maimed person she will sign her corresponding limb or part of her body with the Cross.

When she brings flowers into her house she will be as careful to exclude the acacia as any West-country woman to avoid "may" or whitethorn, for the spiky Maltese acacia is the "thorn" of Palestine wherewith the Saviour was crowned.

These are but a few of the small ways in which the peasant woman pays a somewhat mixed homage to the Old Things as well as to the tenets of her Faith. In her favour it may be said that her "superstitions" are more logical than those of such folk who habitually "touch wood" or object to a third cigarette from one match.

THE FESTAS

The Festa, primarily a religious festival and a Holy Day of Obligation, provides the only relaxation for a hardworking and frugal people. Such simple pleasures as a meal of unaccustomed meat, a little wine, processions, and fireworks give full rein to the most lovable, childlike side of the national character. The importance attaching to these periodical holidays is well illustrated by an old rhyme:

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THE SWEETHEART'S BARGAIN

In the marriage contract, they have it for a pact,
That he takes her to the Feste and sets her on a wall.
That he buys her cakes of sweetmeat, of the sort with hempseed made.
For that's the kind of sweetmeat a bride likes best of all.

It is believed that such a clause used actually to be embodied in the written contract drawn up by the parents and the go-between.

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Each little hamlet has its own feast, in honour of its own particular patron. Each has its own peculiar forms. Of the national feasts that of St. John naturally occupies a place of considerable importance. Certain aspects of its celebration, however, indicate that the Order of St. John was not alone responsible for the enthusiasm which this saint inspires. Busuttil, who has already been quoted at some length, writes of the Feast of St. John as follows:

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"Not unlike other nations, the Maltese are not indifferent in celebrating the Nativity of St. John by kindling great fires in the public streets, and giving their children dolls to carry in their arms on this day, in order to make good the prophecy respecting the Baptist 'Multi in nativitate ejus gaudebunt.'

Days and even weeks before this festival groups of children are seen going out into the country fields to gather straw, twigs, and all sorts of other combustibles which they store up for St. John's Eve.

On the night of June 23rd, the day before the festival of the Saint, great fires are kindled in the streets, squares, and market places of the towns and villages of the Island, and as fire after fire blazes out of the darkness of that summer night, the effect is singularly striking.

These fires are sometimes kept up for hours, being

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continually fed by the scores of by-standers who take great delight in throwing amidst the flames some old rickety piece of furniture which they consider as lumber in their houses. Lots of happy and reckless children, and very often men, are seen merrily leaping in succession over and through the crackling flames."[1]

At the time of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the Grand Master himself, soon after the *Angelus*, used to leave his palace, accompanied by the Grand Prior, the Bishop and two bailiffs, to set fire to some pitch barrels which were placed for the occasion in the square facing the sacred hospital.

Great crowds used to assemble here in order to assist at this ceremony. The setting ablaze of the five casks, and later on, of the eight casks,[2] by the Grand Master, was a signal for the others to kindle their fires in the different parts of the town.

Various opinions are entertained by antiquarian writers with regard to the origin of these fires on St. John's Eve.

From the account given by Jacob Grimm in his *Deutsche Mythologie*, pp. 583, 593, it would appear that the great blaze reserved for the eve of the feast of the nativity of St. John the Baptist on June 23rd is observed with similar rites in every country of Europe.

The kindling of the fire, the leaping over or through the flames clearly show that these rites are essentially of

[1] Leaping over the fires is mentioned among the superstitious rites at the Palilia feasts, instituted in honour of *Pales*, the goddess of shepherds (in the calends of May) in Ovid's Fasti.

"Moxque per ardentes stipulae crepitantis acervos
traijcias celeri strenua membra pede."

The learned Moresin appears to have been of opinion that the custom of leaping over these fires is a vestige of the ordeal, where to be able to pass through fires with safety, was held to be an indication of innocence.

[2] Eight being the languages of the Order.

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796 372 171 heathen origin. They are obviously connected with the worship of the sun, and were doubtless practised long before the Baptist was born. In old heathen times the summer and winter solstices were the two greatest and most widespread festivals in Europe.

These fires (says another writer) are evidently a remnant of the ancient Bel fires of the Druids, at the *Beil* time, which was at the beginning of May. But why do they chiefly occur on the night before the festival of the Saint, instead of the old period of *Beil* time which was the beginning of May? I do not believe that a satisfactory explanation of these circumstances has yet been given by any of the antiquaries. It was perhaps to transfer the practice or custom of lighting these fires from a pagan to a Christian object.

796 372 776 The Nativity of St. John Baptist was a great and solemn festival of the Church, like those of the other great festivals of Martyrs, the eve or vigil of it was, in the early ages, commemorated with appropriate ceremonies. The public devotions were kept up all night in the churches, of which the Saint was the Patron, and the solemnities of the next day were ushered in amongst types and figures appropriate to the occasion. Amongst these was probably introduced a large and unusual exhibition of lights to typify the Baptist who, in the Gospel, is called by the Saviour himself 'A burning, shining light.' What could have been more natural than that the early Christian authorities would have directed the people to light their anniversary fires on the eve of this Saint, and thus give to the national custom a Christian instead of a pagan significance? To this feeling, most likely, is due the transfer of the fires to June 23rd, and perhaps, too, this perpetuation to this day amongst the people.

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Gebelin, in his *Allegories Orientales*, accounts in the following manner for the custom of making fires on Midsummer Eve.

'Can one,' says he, 'omit to mention here the St. John fires, those sacred fires, kindled about midnight, in the very moment of the solstices, by the greatest part of ancient as well as of modern nations—a religious ceremony of the most remote antiquity which was observed for the prosperity of states and people and to dispel every kind of evil? The origin of this fire which is still retained by so many nations, though enveloped in the mist of antiquity, is very simple. It was a *feu de joie*, kindled the very moment the year began; for the first of all years, and the most ancient that we know of, began at this month of June, hence the very name of this month, *Junior*, meaning the youngest, which is renewed; while that of the preceding one is May, *Major*, meaning the ancient.

'Thus the one was the month of young people whilst the other belonged to old men.

'These *feu de joie* were accompanied, at the same time, with vows and sacrifices for the prosperity of the people and the fruits of the earth.

'They danced also round this fire, and the most active leaped over it. Each on departing took a fire brand, and the remains were scattered to the winds, which at the same time that it dispersed the ashes, was thought to expel every evil. When after a long train of years, the year ceased to commence at this solstice, the custom of making these fires, at this time, was still continued by force of habit. Besides, it would have deprived the people of a day of joy in times when there were not many of them; thus the custom has been continued and handed down to us.'

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Dr. Milner is of opinion that the fires lighted up all over the continent, on the eve of June 24th, are not intended as the idolatrous worship of the sun or *Baal*, the Philistine God of Fire, but in honour of Christ's precursor, as alluding to his character of bearing witness to the light (John i. 7) and of his being himself a bright and shining light (John v. 35)."

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It is of some interest to compare the Maltese account with the following notes on English Midsummer customs which appeared in the *Radio Times* recently under the signature of Felix Felton, compere of so many excellent folklore broadcasts:

> "Midsummer's Eve is also St. John's Eve. . . . Sermons on that day used to be preached out of doors in the quadrangle of Magdalen College, Oxford, 'that the preaching might more nearly resemble that of John the Baptist in the wilderness'; and bonfires were lighted in various parts of the country, 'betokennynge that Saint Johan was a lanterne of light to the people.' Then comes a collection of curious legends and superstitions connected with certain herbs. The legends attribute to these all kinds of magical powers; women, it is said, can tell by hempseed[1] who their husband is to be; and in Shropshire it was believed that those who failed to hang up St. John's Wort outside their doors would suffer by their cows going dry and their hens refusing to lay. Finally come the Midsummer's Eve revels and festivals—the old London processions, the revels at Penzance, the gatherings at Stonehenge, and the bonfire festivities still held to-day. . . .
>
> As varied as the customs themselves are the possible

[1] Compare the reference to hempseed in "The Sweetheart's Bargain."

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explanations of them. Two kinds of explanations have to be treated with some caution, the local one and the Christian one . . . and we shall find ourselves going back for the true causes to the worship of the sun and of the seasons. 796 171

The revel, easily degenerating into the brawl, has always found opposition, as in the thunderous verse of an old poet who branded the Midsummer processions as

> Of Edinburgh the great idolatrie
> And manifest abomination.

Other forces have militated against them besides the disapproval of the austere. As another old writer has rather obscurely remarked: 'No suffimen is a greater fugator of phantosmes than gunpowder.' Other such fugators are periods of increased popular education and of quickened pace in national life. These forces have been active enough in our own times, and few Midsummer customs have survived them; but all of them were originally the spontaneous outcome of certain impulses in the make-up of human beings, and thus, past or present, they are of permanent interest to us."

There seems little doubt that the Night of Fires belongs to that very early civilization of which, as has been suggested elsewhere, the Maltese are amongst the direct descendants. What more appropriate than the adaptation of these ancient fires to the honour of that Saint beneath whose banner there happened all that is most valiant in Maltese history? 372 796 174

In one form or another practically all the "seasonal" customs familiar in other countries appear in Malta: All Fools' Day, with its affinity to the Hindu festival of Huli; May Day, when the children gather green bows in honour of Flora; New Year's Day, when lime is strewn on doorsteps in token of good luck; but Malta's most popular holiday is the period of Carnival. Its 796 [527] [171]

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• 796 adoption by the English garrison may have done much to save it from extinction. Here is a description of Carnival, written in 1850:[1]

> "The Carnival is another source of popular amusement; this begins on the Sunday preceding Lent, and lasts for three days. The afternoon is the principal time of the feast, during which numerous persons in masks are seen walking about the streets, endeavouring to amuse themselves, and to be a source of amusement to others. The variety of dresses used on these occasions is beyond description. Not a few pride themselves in playing all kinds of antics in a black habit, with long red horns, and a huge tail of the same colour. Calesses filled with ladies follow in a train through the principal streets, who readily engage in pelting confits and peas with any of the by-standers who will enter the lists with them. The number of respectable persons, however, who mask in the public streets has greatly diminished within the last few years, and it is to be hoped that their good example will soon be followed by an entire relinquishment of so absurd [783] and foolish a diversion. The first Sunday after the carnival, most of those persons who have masked repair to the parish church of Casal Zabbar, called *della Grazia*, by way of penance for their follies.
>
> On Saturday preceding the first day of the feast the *Parata* is celebrated. This consists of several companies of men, dressed up in gay ribbons, and armed with wooden staves and shields, who meet together under the houses of the wealthy, and perform several evolutions, striking their shields and dancing at the sound of music. This is concluded by raising up a little girl, splendidly arrayed, and girded with a small dagger, which she is

[1] G. P. BADGER, *A Description of Malta and Gozo.*

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

taught to wave, while the band plays the national anthem, 796
'God Save the King.' In the time of the Order they proceeded to the palace to receive permission for the celebration of the Carnival. Their request was signified to the Grand Master by one of the knights, and upon the boon being granted, they immediately performed a dance in front of the palace, and afterwards before the door of any other person, whom they thought would pay them for their trouble.

The origin of this amusement must be sought for in 796
the annals of pagan rites, which Christianity has not 171
succeeded in abolishing in several countries of Europe. In a work on Malta, *Par un voyageur François*, the author ranks it with a popular feast very ancient in Thessaly, the *Salzea* of the Babylonians, the *Chronia* of the Athenians, and the *Saturnalia* of Rome, which many of the early Christians continued, notwithstanding the zealous efforts which were made by the Church to abolish them."

It will be noted that the public "masque" was regarded 796
as "an absurd and foolish diversion." The "diversion" must 656
at some time have proved rather more dangerous than absurd, for the wearing of masks after sunset is now forbidden by law. It is of interest also to note that an attempt on the part [669]
of a strict Sabbatarian Governor who hailed from north of the Tweed to abolish the merrymaking on the Sunday of Carnival led to a major civil disturbance which could only be quelled at bayonet point, and which is still remembered by those who are, for one cause or another, "agin' the Government!"

DYING

Zeppu's tired hands are at rest. They lie, brown and calloused, 763
upon the coverlet. The village bell tolls urgently. The *fratelli*

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
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he cares to attend the Cathedral of Mdina, the island's earliest capital, on the 4th November, he will hear a Mass said for the repose of the soul of Roger the Norman, Count of Sicily, who ended the Arab occupation of Malta in 1090 and is there commemorated as "Deliverer of Malta and Founder of the *mensa* [table] of the Cathedral, the Bishop and the Canons." Should he chance to be in Malta before the beginning of Lent he will have the opportunity to witness in the carnival festivities not only the jollifications common to other Mediterranean carnivals but also features of more local interest, such as the Parata dance on the Palace Square, which takes its symbolism from the capture of a Maltese bride by a Moslem corsair.

If he prolongs his stay into the summer he will see on the 29th June, the feast of S. Peter and S. Paul, one of the most characteristic of Maltese popular functions in the densely thronged Mnarja races. These races, for horses and donkeys, are of unknown but undoubtedly great age. The course is a piece of straight, hard road leading uphill towards the big square in front of Mdina, a square known as the Saqqaja. Here, from his great stone box, the Grand Master in former days, in these days the Governor of Malta, hands the banners of victory down to the winning competitors, while interested spectators watch the proceedings from two smaller but similar boxes, flanking the Grand Master's and belonging to some of the leading families of the island.

The name Mnarja is a corruption of the Latin *luminaria* (illumination), for it was the custom on that day to illuminate the churches of Mdina and the adjacent Rabat in honour of the two saints. A more picturesque if unfortunately less trustworthy tradition derives Mnarja from Hymen, the goddess of marriage, it being supposed that the young men of the island were formerly in the habit of choosing their wives from among the maidens crowding to watch the contest. This much, at all events, may be urged in support of the latter theory, that until modern times Maltese brides

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
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QUEEN SQUARE AND THE ROYAL LIBRARY, VALETTA

[See pp. 199–200.]

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A PROCESSION EMERGING FROM S. JOHN'S

796
363
342

STREET IN SIĠĠIEWI

Note the "fat" mouldings.

[See p 67.]

[facing P. 192]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
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is no sacrifice they will not gladly make for the greater dignity and beauty of their churches. Take, for example, the case of Mġarr—one of the smallest and poorest of the parishes of Malta and the one most cherished by that great seaman and lover of Malta, the late Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher. Here between the two wars the inhabitants, nearly all hard-working peasants, under the enthusiastic leadership of their parish priest, Father (later Monsignor) Edgar Salomone, built a great new church by their own efforts, bringing their weekly contributions to the building fund in eggs and fowls and vegetables and whatever else they produce.

At street corners statues of saints, sometimes also of souls enveloped in a purgatorial blaze, afford them ever-present reminders, encouraging or minatory as the case may be, of the next world; in this one they love the great ecclesiastical ceremonies, particularly the processions which are one of the features of Maltese life. These assume on Good Friday something of the character of a Passion Play, with members of lay confraternities staggering along Merchants' Street in Valetta beneath the weight of life-size groups of the Passion carved with gruesome realism. I have also seen these processions in Palermo, where I have been shocked at the flippancy and irreverence not so much of the onlookers as of the actual participants. The Maltese play their parts in these functions with profound and solemn devoutness. Indeed, some of them may be bearing their burden, whatever it is, in fulfilment of a self-imposed penance, concealing their features behind a hood with eye-holes that covers the head.

But on the annual *festa*, the local saint's day, of their village they give themselves up wholeheartedly to rejoicings, which are definitely on the noisy side. For they are punctuated by the explosions of crackers, maroons and every procurable form of noise-producing apparatus, and they are illuminated by ingenious, locally made fireworks. On these days the casals are a brave sight as they fly from the top of every house of any importance the flag of

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
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If the Church in Malta thus lost its right of granting asylum, its Head acquired at an even earlier stage of the British occupation another right which is carefully preserved to the present day. In 1801 Major-General Pigot, then in charge of the administration and in command of the troops, issued the following Standing Order to the "Garrison of La Valette and its Dependencies":

> His Eminence the Bishop of Malta is to receive from all guards honour due to a Brigadeer [*sic*] General.

When, after the First World War, the rank of Brigadier-General was abolished, the Archbishop of Malta was promoted, from the point of view of military compliments, to be a Major-General; and the guard never fails to turn out to him every day that he crosses the Palace Square.

It is sometimes said that the privilege was granted in recognition of the military services of Bishop Francis Xavier Caruana, who as Canon Caruana played a leading rôle in the rising against the French in 1798–1800. But this story is picturesque rather than probable, seeing that the salute to the Bishop was ordered in 1801 and Canon Caruana did not become Bishop of Malta until thirty years later. Its origin lay no doubt in the wish of the Occupying Power to demonstrate in a public manner its respect for the Church of Malta and its Head.

For the Roman Catholic Church is in Malta by law established; its canon law is, as in Quebec, the law of the land. It follows that contact between Church and State is close, and this contact is not confined, on the part of the representatives of the State, to relations with the hierarchy but is maintained equally with the parish clergy. The link finds its formal and public expression on the 2nd February of each year, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the ceremony of Candlemas, the "Candelora." On the morning of this day all the parish priests, wearing their best cassocks, repair to the Palace in Valetta, and one

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
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795 by one, as the names of their parishes are called out, advance
659 to the Governor's throne and present to him a large and
heavy wax candle, generally embellished with painted
•796 decorations.

This Candlemas ceremony has been maintained uninterruptedly from the days when the State was the Order of S. John; and the Governor takes this occasion, as did his predecessors the Grand Masters, to address the assembly on the problems of the day, with particular emphasis on the manner in which Church and State can best co-operate for the benefit of the people. It gives the Governor of Malta the same sort of opportunity, *mutatis mutandis*, to make public pronouncements on matters of policy as the British Prime Minister is given at the Lord Mayor's Banquet. A collation brings this happy and useful function to a close.

Here it may be added that the Governor retains, as the successor of the Grand Masters, certain ecclesiastical patronage, such as the nomination to the post of Dean of the Cathedral Chapter of Malta and the right of presentation to various benefices. A survival of another sort from the days of the Knights is the religious corporation known as the Collegiate Church of S. Paul's Grotto at Rabat, whose Canons still wear at their ceremonies the habit, *stolone* and cross of the Order.

241 The principal industry of the Maltese islands is agriculture,
433 and the Maltese, despite the stony nature of their land, are skilful and industrious farmers with a wonderful knack of extracting the utmost from the soil, despite methods necessarily somewhat primitive since their fields are too small for modern agricultural machinery. Maltese potatoes and Maltese oranges have a high reputation. Vegetables are good, especially tomatoes; wheat does well where there
[439] is room to grow it. But the islands can produce only a
fraction of their annual consumption of cereals, and much
251 has therefore to be imported from outside. Among the most
178 familiar features surviving from the era of the Knights are